

ROMANIA

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OUTPUT 1

A Proposed Early Warning Mechanism for Early School Leaving Prevention and Proposed Action Plan for Implementation

Main Document

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Acronyms

ACoR	Association of Communes of Romania	EWM	Early Warning Mechanism
AJOFM	County Agency for Employment	FTR	Family-type residence
AJPIS	County Agency for Payments and Social Inspection	HCOP	Human Capital Operational Program
AMR	Romanian Association of Municipalities	INS	National Institute for Statistics
ANA	Romanian Anti-Drug Agency	ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
ANC	National Authority for Qualifications	ISE	Institute of Education Sciences
ANOFM	National Agency for Employment	IVET	Initial Vocational Education and Training
ANPDCA	National Authority for the Protection of the Rights of the Child and Adoption	M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
ANR	National Agency for Roma	MFE	Ministry of European Funds
AOR	Association of Romanian Towns	MMJS	Ministry of Labor and Social Justice
APL	Local Public Authority	MOH	Ministry of Health
ARACIP	Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-university Education	MONE	Ministry of National Education
		NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
BSI	Bucharest School Inspectorate	POCU	Human Capital Operation Program
		PFP	Professional Foster Parent
CC	County Council	SAS	School after School
CCD	Teachers' House	SC	Second Chance
CCS	Community Consultative Structure	SEN	Special Educational Needs
CJRAE	County Center for Educational Resources and Assistance	SIIR	Romanian Education Integrated IT System
CN	Community Nurse	SOPHRD	Sectoral Operational Program for Human Resources Development
CNDIPT	National Centre for the Development of Vocational Education and Training	SPAS	Social Assistance Public Service
CNE	National Council of Primary and Secondary School Students	SRSS	Structural Reform Support System
CNEE	National Council for Evaluation and Examination	TAU	Territorial-Administrative Unit
CPECA	Anti-Drug Prevention, Assessment and Counselling Center	TG	Target Group
CSE	Student School Council	UMATE	Unit for Monitoring and Technical Assistance for EWM
CSI	County School Inspectorate	UNCJR	National Union of Romanian County Councils
DGASPC	Directorate General for Social Assistance and Child Protection	VET	Vocational Education and Training
ESF	European Social Fund	WB	World Bank
ESL	Early School Leaving		

Executive Summary

Early school leaving (ESL) refers to people aged 18 to 24 who leave education and training without attaining lower secondary education. Early school leavers have difficulty finding stable jobs and are, therefore, at risk of poverty and social exclusion. Reducing the number of early leavers from education and training is one of the key objectives of the EU 2020 Strategy.

Romania is one of the EU outliers with the ESL rate of 16.4 percent in 2018.¹ While the ESL rate in big cities is below EU average and well within the 2020 national target set at 11.3 percent, the ESL rate in rural areas is considerably higher at 26 percent and shows a growth tendency.

Romania's National Strategy to Reduce Early School Leaving envisages the adoption of an Early Warning Mechanism (EWM) for addressing ESL. This EWM was developed by the WB under the Administration Agreement SRSS/S2018/063 between the European Commission - Structural Reform Support Service - and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

While contributing to a reduction in the level of early school leaving in Romania, this EWM will also contribute to enhancing cohesion, competitiveness, sustainable growth and job creation in Romania. The proposed EWM addresses two gaps that have been identified in the current Romanian policy framework for preventing and reducing ESL: (i) there are no clear and mandatory procedures for collecting data on groups at risk of ESL, and (ii) there is no comprehensive intervention mechanism involving School Inspectorates and schools that would ensure coordinated implementation of ESL reduction measures at national level.

Having analyzed the best practice from European countries that have successfully prevented and reduced ESL, as well as the Romanian experience, the proposed EWM is based on a multilevel and multidisciplinary approach to ESL through prevention, intervention and compensation measures and collaboration among institutions from different sectors and levels. While the proposed EWM addresses the school, county inspectorate, and central level, the school has been identified as the key level and focus of interventions. Given the key role of the school in the proposed EWM, but also of all other levels, this document also highlights the need for human and financial resources and training. Importantly, based on this EWM, a national program for addressing ESL is promoted.

The proposed EWM includes a coherent methodological framework for *detection/identification and intervention measures* and, *an institutional architecture* of specialized human resources able to provide efficient services and an action plan to coordinate and implement the interventions. As per the Administration Agreement SRSS/S2018/063, the EWM will be coupled with *a data collection methodology* (to be developed separately) for easy access to relevant data from a variety of locations (schools, local social services etc.) to ensure collaboration across levels, sectors and institutions.

The proposed EWM and action plan reflect feedback received from relevant stakeholders during consultations at local, county and central levels. The EWM and the methodology for data collection will be tested in ten communities facing high ESL risks to inform further piloting exercises to be considered by the Ministry of National Education before scaling up at national level.

¹ European Commission – Education and Training Monitor, Romania 2019

Introduction

Across the EU, approximately six million youth leave school, on a yearly basis, before acquiring basic qualifications or skills required to enter the labor market. These young people have difficulty in finding stable jobs, therefore being at risk of poverty and social exclusion risk. For this reason, reducing the number of early leavers from education and training to less than 10 percent by 2020 was one of the headline targets of Europe 2020 strategy² to which all the EU Member States committed in 2011. The Recommendations of the European Council³ adopted in 2011 urged the Member States to develop targeted evidence-based policies based on national conditions in order to effectively tackle ESL. It further advised the Member States to focus on three key measures: prevention, intervention and compensation for addressing ESL either as part of a comprehensive strategy or as specific policies and/or measures. In the same vein, the Commission Staff Working Paper *Reducing early school leaving*⁴ emphasizes the importance of having early warning systems in place which are seen as key instruments for the reduction of ESL. Similar messages were conveyed by the EC's Country Specific Recommendations provided to some Member States, including Romania, in the context of the European Semester which identified ESL as a policy priority area.

The Member States' response to the EC guidance varied according to the national circumstances. In Romania's case it consisted of a fully-fledged strategy on reducing ESL. The National Strategy to Reduce Early School Leaving in Romania⁵ is underpinned by the three recommended building blocks: prevention, intervention and compensation, as described below.

Prevention measures aim to reduce the risk of ESL before problems start. Such measures optimize the provision of education and training to support better learning outcomes and to remove obstacles to educational success. They aim to lay a solid foundation early, for children to develop their potential and to integrate well into schools.

Intervention measures aim to avoid ESL by improving the quality of education and training at the level of the educational institutions, by reacting to early warning signs and by providing targeted support to pupils or groups of pupils at risk of early school leaving.

Compensation measures aim to help those who left school prematurely to re-engage in education, offering routes to re-enter education and training and gain the qualifications they missed.

This strategy represented an *ex-ante conditionality* for Romania's access to EU funds in the Programming Period 2014-2020. The development of an **Early Warning Mechanism** for the prevention of ESL in Romania is one of the key measures stipulated in the National Strategy to Reduce ESL in Romania.

This document should be seen in the above-mentioned policy context. It was prepared under the Administration Agreement SRSS/S2018/063 between the European Commission - Structural Reform Support Service - and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. This Agreement has two specific objectives: **(i)** to develop an **Early Warning Mechanism** (EWM) for the prevention of early school leaving (ESL) in Romania and a **multi-annual action plan**, and **(ii)** to elaborate a **methodology for data collection and data use**, including a list of **Key Performance Indicators** (KPIs) to support the implementation of the action plan.

This document covers the first specific objective, namely the development of an EWM for the prevention of ESL and its associated action plan.

For easy reference and utilization, the document is structured into three parts:

Main document: A proposed EWM mechanism and action plan for implementation (Core document)

² EUROPE 2020 A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth /* COM/2010/2020 final */

³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2011:191:0001:0006:EN:PDF>

⁴ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/1727c557-8ffa-4d80-8bc9-dc0feff6d836/language-en>

⁵ This strategy was formally approved by Government Decision no. 417/2015 and formally endorsed by the European Commission.

Annex I: Toolkit for EWM implementation

Annex II: Review of current practices in EU countries and in Romania to address ESL

More specifically, in the main document, Chapter 1 defines the ESL issue, including ESL factors and triggers, and summarizes relevant practices to address ESL in EU countries as well as Romania's efforts in this respect. Chapter 2 focuses on the proposed EWM in terms of approach as well as on the EWM target groups: students (all education levels) at school dropout risk; school-age children (6-17 years old) outside the education system (having never been enrolled in any school, having dropped out or left school at an early stage); and youth aged 18-24 who completed no more than the eighth grade and have not enrolled in any other form of education or vocational training. At the same time, Chapter 2 provides a description of the EWM, its institutional support structure, as well as the consultation process undertaken during the EWM preparation.

Chapter 3 provides a detailed presentation of the EWM implementation structured into three components: prevention, intervention and compensation and includes the sequence of steps related to the identification of the relevant target groups and the measures to be applied. Chapter 4 is devoted to monitoring and reporting on progress in implementation of measures to prevent and reduce ESL. Chapter 5 presents key challenges expected during the implementation of the EWM and draws recommendations on institutional, regulatory and governance changes needed for the effective operationalization and deployment of the proposed EWM, including adequate financing. Finally, Chapter 6 provides an Action Plan for the implementation of the proposed EWM comprising: specific steps to be taken as part of the identification, assessment and planning of activities, their implementation, as well as for monitoring and reporting by type of measure (prevention, intervention and compensation), roles and responsibilities of key institutions involved and timeline.

Annex I contains the toolkit for the implementation of the EWM including all instruments (e.g. survey form, observation sheets, etc.) proposed by the World Bank (WB) team and discussed with key institutional actors during the consultation process. At the same time, it provides specific guidance on their application, as needed, as well as on other implementation related aspects. Finally, Annex II presents a detailed review of current practices in EU countries and in Romania to reduce ESL.

In developing the EWM, the WB team drew on the recommendations of a previous SRSS funded study on Practices on data collection and analysis to reduce ESL in Romania (2017). Importantly, the proposed EWM responds to the MONE's request to develop an EWM in view of application at national level, for both students at risk of ESL in school and for those who have already left school, building on both international and national experience. The proposed EWM also ensures the coordination among relevant sectors in view of an integrated approach, as well as clear roles and responsibilities at school, county and national level. In this context, the team also considered the National Strategy for the Promotion and Protection of Children's Rights 2014-2020 and the National Strategy on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction 2015-2020, as well as existing legislation on integrated services at community level. Moreover, official statistics and administrative data were used, in addition to public surveys and information from different projects and initiatives for ESL prevention and reduction.

Some of the data and information reflected in this document consider the results of the field monitoring exercise carried out by MONE experts in 2018 to assess the implementation progress of the Strategy to Reduce Early School Leaving in Romania. At the same time, the EWM design builds on the unitary methodology for elaborating development plans for prevention and support community services for children and family developed by the WB in 2018 under another technical assistance project⁶. The proposed EWM reflects all information, comments and suggestions made by key stakeholders, e.g. institutional representatives at central and local level, non-governmental organizations (NGO) active in the field, parents and children, during the extensive consultation process conducted by the WB team in June 2019.



Beneficiaries of the proposed EWM

- The Ministry of National Education, its leadership and directorates, and the Technical Working Group for early school leaving prevention in charge of monitoring the National Strategy for Reducing ESL in Romania;
- School Inspectorates, especially those located in counties with high ESL rates;
- School principals, teachers;
- Early school leavers and children at risk of ESL or drop out, and their families;
- Other stakeholders:
 - ✓ Institutions and agencies subordinated to the MONE;
 - ✓ Other ministries, agencies and local organizations charged with promoting children's rights;
 - ✓ Teachers' and parents' associations;
 - ✓ NGOs and informal groups involved in education and child protection.

Finally, according to the above-mentioned Administration Agreement, the proposed EWM and the methodology for data collection and data use (to be developed separately), will be tested in ten rural and urban communities by May 2020.

⁶ Agreement between the World Bank and ANPDCA for "Elaboration of the plan to de-institutionalize children in institutions and ensure the transition of their care to the community". See Outcome #4 (April 2018) and Outcome #6 (November 2018).

1 Early School Leaving (ESL)

This chapter discusses the ESL definition and measurement, the ESL situation in the EU and in Romania in the broader context of the EU 2020 targets, ESL factors and triggers, as well as a summary of current practices in EU countries and Romania's efforts to reduce ESL.

1.1 Definition and Measurement

The ESL indicator is defined at EU level as the percentage of the population aged 18-24 with - at most - lower secondary education and not in further education or training⁷. In Romania, lower secondary education is equivalent of grade 8.⁸ This indicator shows the impact of the education system in relation to the labor market over a 3 to 9-year timeframe in relation to young people who completed no more than lower secondary education and left the education system around the age of 15.

Therefore, in order to develop ESL prevention and reduction policies and measures, additional indicators are used to illustrate real-time evolutions across the student population: school enrollment (by age group and education level), school dropout, and school cohort analysis.

- Education participation analysis indicates both the number (and the share of total school aged population) of children enrolled, as well as those who are not enrolled in education broken down by age group and education level.
- School dropout is calculated by MONE based on official data from the National Institute of Statistics (INS) based on the difference between the number of students enrolled at the beginning of school year and those enrolled at the end of the same school year as share of total students enrolled at the beginning of school year.
- School cohort analysis is the best-known method for analyzing school participation. This analysis focuses on one generation going through an entire education cycle which allows for a more accurate picture on the size of dropout in schools. Moreover, if a cohort analysis considers all levels of education, this may outline school population losses in terms of transitions from one education level to another (from ISCED 0 to ISCED 3), from kindergarten to primary, from primary to lower secondary and from lower secondary to high school and vocational education.

All these indicators/methods have advantages and limitations but taken together they provide useful information for evidence-based policy making with high impact on preventing and reducing school dropout which will be reflected in the ESL rate (youth aged 18-24) over an extended timeframe.

The Education and Training Monitor (2018) highlights that Romania, despite having been implementing several measures to modernize its education system, still lags on most indicators (2017) included in the Social Scoreboard.⁹ Thus, Romania remains one of the countries not reaching EU 2020 targets, while public expenditure on education is well below the EU average. Romania made significant progress concerning employment of educated youth. However, equity, rural-urban gaps and Roma inclusion are key challenges with impact on inclusive growth and social inequality. *Figure 1* below shows Romania's performance on key indicators compared to EU targets and EU 28 averages, including a comparison with Portugal that reached and even exceeded its targets. Regarding ESL, Romania set its EU 2020 target to 11.3 percent (compared to 10 percent target at EU level) based on a more realistic assessment of both economic growth prospects, as well as expected impact of measures to reduce the ESL rate¹⁰. Nevertheless, the estimated trend significantly differed from the real trend. ESL rates remained high between 2010 and 2018, thus suggesting low chances

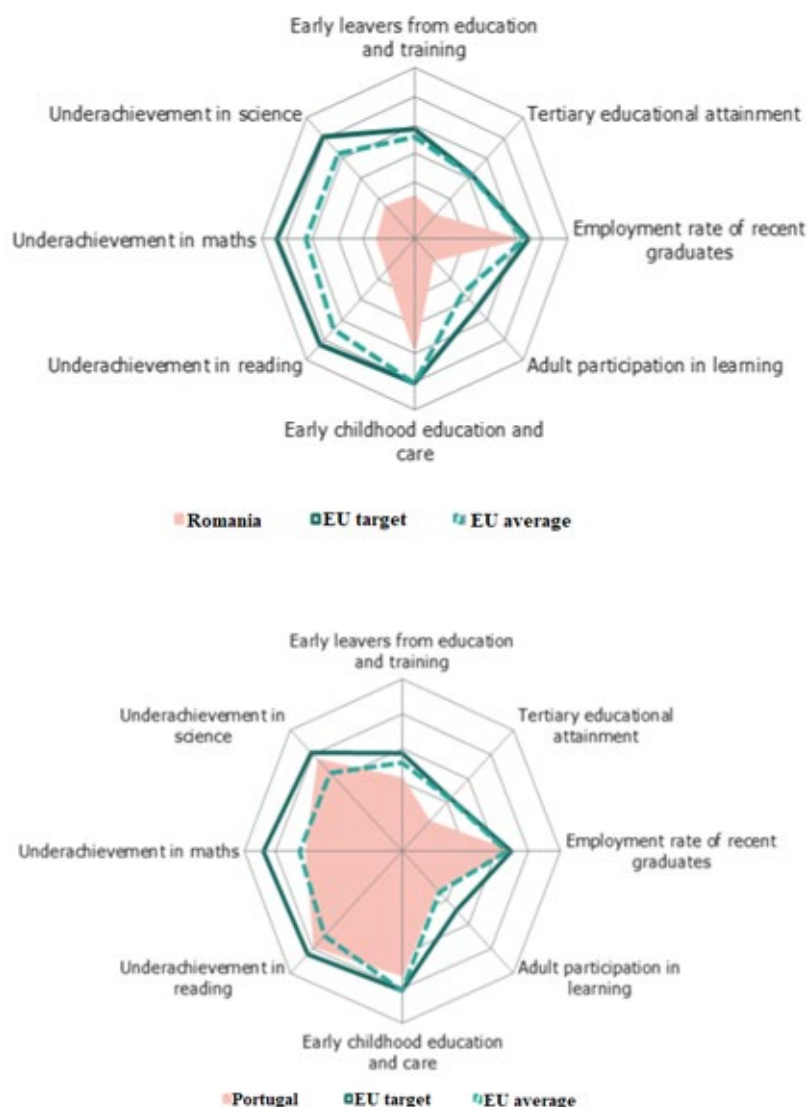
⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/t2020_40/default/table?lang=en

⁸ In some other EU countries, lower secondary education is the equivalent of grade 10.

¹⁰ MONE (2015: 26).

to reach the 2020 strategic target, especially in a context of the chronic underfinancing of the education sector (Figure 2). Equity in education, the rural-urban gap and Roma inclusion remain key challenges, with impact on inclusive growth and social inequalities¹¹. While the ESL rate in large urban areas is 4.5 percent, hence lower than the European average and well below the 2020 strategic target, in small urban areas and suburbs the rate is 17.5 percent and 27.1 percent in rural areas. Moreover, the ESL rate in urban areas is decreasing, whereas in rural areas it is increasing.

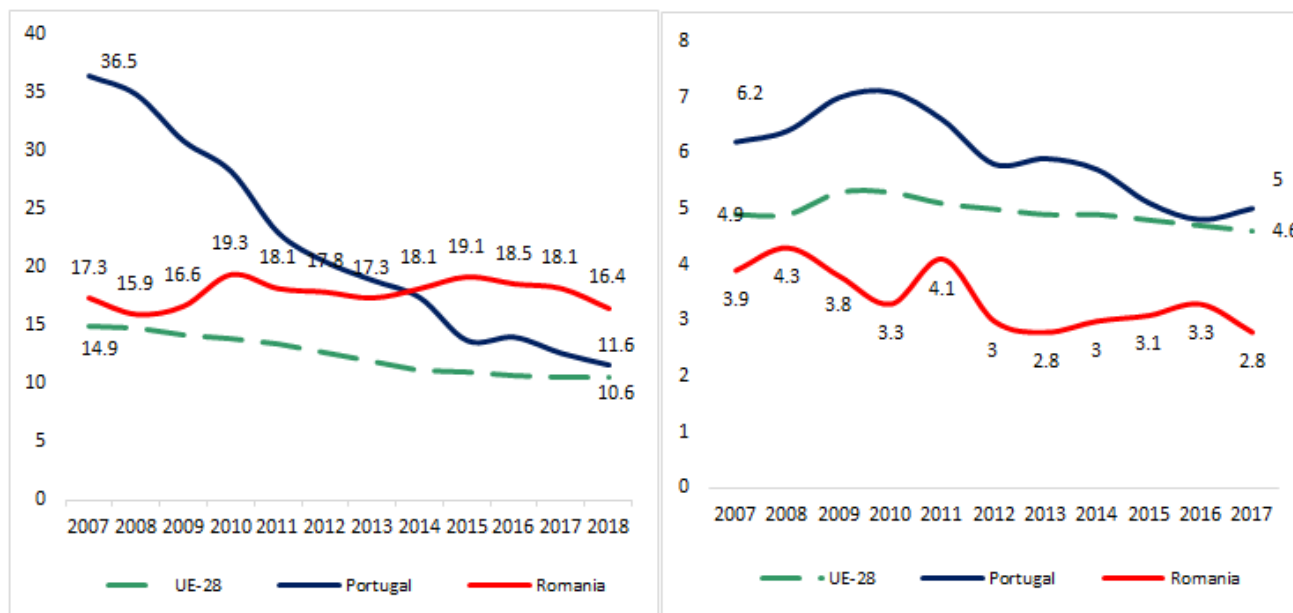
Figure 1. Romania and Portugal vs. EU Targets and EU-28 average on key indicators.



Source: The European Commission (2018). Calculations by DG for Education and Culture, based on the data provided by Eurostat (LFS 2017, UOE 2016) and OECD (PISA 2015).

Note: All scores in Figure 1 above are based on a maximum value (highest performance levels in the outer ring) and a minimum value (lowest performance in the center of the figure). The continuous line in bold represents the strategic targets at European level. The intermittent line in bold indicates the average European values (EU-28). The areas marked in matte pink illustrate education achievement for Romania and Portugal: whereas Portugal has reached or exceeded its strategic targets on most of the key indicators (see spider at the bottom of Figure 1 above) Romania is advancing only on two indicators, namely the employment rate of recent graduates and early childhood education and care (see spider at the top of Figure 1 above).

Figure 2. ESL rate (% of 18-24 years old) and public expenditure on education (% GDP).



Source: Eurostat, 2019.

Importantly, the early school leaving rate is nearly double in the Central, North-East and South-East regions of Romania as compared to EU average (2017 data). Furthermore, two counties (Călărași and Ialomița) present cumulative ESL risk factors: predominant rural population, areas with low demographic density, poverty and high repetition and school dropout rates.¹² The highest risk of exclusion associated with school dropout is among boys in rural areas. For all these young people leaving school, the future is uncertain, as they are exposed to disproportionately high risks of unemployment or low-quality jobs, high dependency on social benefits, poor physical and mental health, poverty and social marginalization.

Romania is one of the few European countries where the majority of early school leavers drop out to get a job.¹³ European Commission's reports further indicate that the majority of these young people are from low-income families and are encouraged to find a job early to ensure their survival. Even if boys and girls leave school at an early stage in equal numbers, nearly all young men seek or find employment, whereas more than half of the young women become housewives (and do not seek employment).¹⁴ In other words, the high ESL rate has direct impact on women's economic inactivity rate, which is already a big concern at the European level.

More than 1 in 10 students in a cohort entering grade 5 drops out by the end of grade 8 (especially in grades 7 and 8), while, by the end of grade 10, nearly 2 in 10 students drop out.¹⁵ Between school years 2010/2011 and 2015/2016, the share of out of school children of primary education (6-10 years old) constantly increased, and almost doubled over this period.¹⁶ Within the school age population corresponding to lower secondary (11–14 years old) the share of out of school children increased even more.

¹² MONE (2015: 53).

¹³ Eurostat 2018 data, edat_lfse_14 and gov_10a_exp.

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Early_leavers_from_education_and_training

¹⁴ In 2018, ESL rate was 16.7 percent among men and 16.1 percent among women. According to 2018 data, two thirds of the 18-to-24-year-old men who left school at an early stage were employed, whereas another 20 percent were unemployed, but were looking for employment (Eurostat, edat_lfse_14 indicator).

¹⁵ (Horga et al., 2017: 79-80).

¹⁶ Horga et al. (2017: 55).

A comparison of resident population with the student population between 2002 and 2017 shows (Table 1)¹⁷ that in 2017, Romania had considerably fewer children and youth under the age of 25. Moreover, data for 2017 indicates that there are 187,000 out of school children aged 6 to 14 at the national level, as well as very high numbers among the age groups 15-18 and 19-24.

Table 1. Children and Youth in Romania, Resident Population and Student Population, 2002—2017.

Age Groups	Change in Resident Population, 2002 to 2017, %	Change in Student Population as share of the Resident Population 2002 to 2017, %	Student Population in 2017, thousands	Resident Children and Youth out of School in 2017, thousands
0 - 5	-11	+11	512	654
6 - 10	-12	-8	950	100
11 - 14	-36	0	752	87
15 - 18	-36	+10	659	193
19 - 24	-38	+12	556	693

Source: NIS, 2018.

In this context, measures aimed at preventing or reducing ESL, including a dedicated early warning mechanism, should address both students at risk of dropout (at all education levels) as well as out of school children aged 6-18 who either never went to school or dropped out. Youth aged 19-24 should also be considered. The (re)integration of out-of-school children and youth remains a big challenge in the next years in addition to enhancing the quality of education and strengthening preventive measures targeting students already enrolled in school.

1.2 ESL Factors and Triggers

Early school leaving, as well as dropping out, is usually preceded by gradual distancing of a student from the school that is often manifested as absenteeism, low academic achievement and frequent inadequate behavior. The fact that these warning signals appear over time makes early identification and intervention extremely important. The more serious and diverse the signals are, the more difficult an effective intervention becomes. Therefore, early identification of warning signals is key for preventing early school leaving. Yet, there are also cases when ESL or dropping out are triggered by unexpected events, such as a family crisis, the child going abroad, etc. In such cases, of course, early warning and preventive intervention are not possible, and compensation measures have to be initiated. In general, early school leaving is triggered by a cluster of causes associated with a complex set of risk factors. Therefore, ESL reduction and prevention measures should respond to multiple risk factors and comprehensively cover a wide range of needs of children and youth. The risk factors associated with early school leaving which are often mentioned in specialized literature are the following:

- **Individual or family related factors**, especially poverty and lack of financial means needed to cover the education costs, in addition to child-parent relationship, parental support and involvement in school-related activities, parents' education level or family prioritization of education and its value. Studies indicate, though, that there are "disadvantaged students who, against all odds, are resilient and successful in school".¹⁸
- **School related factors** pertaining to school environment, organizational culture, relationship between teaching staff and students, teaching and learning quality, school—community—family relations, school resources or services provided in school. Also, previous studies showed a direct link between low quality of education and school dropout and absenteeism.¹⁹

¹⁷ The World Bank, presentation during the project launch event, organized on February 12, 2019.

¹⁸ OECD (2011).

¹⁹ OECD (2012); the European Commission (2013).

- **Community related factors**, e.g. local traditions and culture, gender-specific roles, education and care practices, living conditions, available resources, predominant values and beliefs, etc.
- **Institutional factors** pertaining to the entire education system further discussed in this report.

A UNICEF comparative study involving children in four types of households – poor, extremely poor, with migrant parents, and middle-class – revealed that the school dropout and the early school leaving negatively correlated with the parents’ level of education, family income and school-related household expenses. At the same time, they positively correlated with Roma ethnicity, living in the rural area, the family’s number of children and the child’s rank in the family. In households with many children, the youngest ones find themselves at a considerably greater ESL risk.²⁰ Teachers interviewed by the WB team perceive ethnicity as the key factor for both risks. Being Roma considerably increases a child’s school dropout and ESL risk, regardless of the child’s age, gender and health, mother’s level of education, number of children, number of parents at home, residential area and school-related household expenses (or family income).

The community censuses among families with children in 30 rural communities in localities with a high number of children placed under the special protection system (also known as *source communities*), carried out by the World Bank team in September—October 2018 under another project, sheds light on the prevalence of the known risk factors in rural communities. In surveyed rural communities, 21 percent of the households with children live in poverty. Additionally, in 15 percent of these households with children, one or both parents are illiterate. The parents’ lack of education is associated with both unofficial employment within the informal sector (leading to perilous work and income uncertainty) and a major poverty risk, affecting more than 56 percent of households.²¹

Poverty, particularly associated with parents’ illiteracy, translates into families’ not being interested in and not investing in their children’s education. The children in these households are at a considerably higher risk of never having been enrolled in school or not attending, dropping out or leaving school early. And, if they do go to school, they are at a significant risk of not attending their classes on a daily basis, having poor educational outcomes, such as failed classes and grade repetition, or a history of penalties received in school (*Figure 3*). Therefore, the chances the children in these households have of breaking the cycle of poverty are very limited, as many of them are at risk of inheriting poverty from their parents.

In Romania, 9.6 percent of all children aged 17 years and younger – 9.6 percent in rural and 5.8 percent in urban areas – live in marginalized areas. World Bank surveys have shown that 3.2 percent of the urban population and 6.2 percent of the rural population in Romania live in extremely disadvantaged *marginalized areas* where people have completed no more than lower secondary education, earn informal incomes (usually from agriculture) and have poor housing conditions, even by rural standards, with generally poor access to the basic infrastructure and utilities (overcrowded houses and/or with no access to running water or electricity).²² The share of (self-identified) Roma population, in marginalized areas is 30.8 percent in urban areas and 38.7 percent in rural areas. These disadvantaged areas are considered “problematic” due to a combination of factors, more specifically high number of low-income households, low levels of education and qualifications required on the labor market, high number of single mothers, high number of children per family and high juvenile crime rate. In rural areas, disadvantaged areas are characterized by low accessibility, mud roads, inadequate houses, exposure to environmental risks (floods, landslides) and poor quality or lack of public services, as the houses presented in the pictures below.

²⁰ Stănculescu, Marin and Popp, 2012: 63. The study was based on a non-representative sample of households in different regions, in rural and urban areas. The sample included 104 households comprising 194 children aged 0-18 and 233 adults.

²¹ In total, the risk identification fiche was applied to 5,840 households having children. World Bank, Output #6, 2018. Stănculescu, Grigoraș, Teșliuc, Pop, coord, 2016 - *source communities* (rural and urban) are defined as those localities with high number of children placed under the special protection system as compared with other areas/localities. Sub-localities refer to a neighborhood, a street, or a group of houses and/or apartment buildings in urban areas, an entire village, small village or only a group of houses in rural area.

²² Swinkels et al. (coord.) (2014) for the urban areas, and Teșliuc et al. (coord.) (2015) for the rural areas.

At the same time, another study conducted by the World Bank, UNICEF and ANPDCA showed that both urban and rural marginalized areas are highly likely to be *source communities* for children placed under the care of the special protection system; in other words, the majority of children placed under this system come from marginalized areas.²³ The prevention of child family separation and ensuring equal opportunities for children and youth in these areas may only be achieved by developing community services to support families and increase access to medical care, education, employment, adequate housing and other public services. To this end, integrated services should allow harmonization and alignment of various programs and interventions implemented with the support of well-trained social workers and other qualified experts. An effective administration of such services requires adequate budget allocations.

The Education and Training Monitor of 2018 underlines that Roma education inclusion remains a major challenge. The fact that a disproportionately high share of Roma studies in disadvantaged schools, perpetuates the cycle of exclusion. Dropout among Roma may also be explained by high levels of poverty, limited parental participation in education and lower qualifications of teachers in predominantly Roma schools. In 2016, Romania adopted an anti-segregation roadmap and revised its legislation by expanding the focus from Roma to a wider set of target groups including children with disabilities, from rural areas and from disadvantaged backgrounds. The responsibilities of school inspectorates and the quality assurance agency (ARACIP) to monitor segregation were expanded accordingly. Unfortunately, monitoring activities were limited by significant delays in developing the monitoring methodology²⁴. The methodology is currently being finalized and approved and will be piloted in school year 2019/20. The proposed ESL EWM has benefitted from the analytical work identifying risk factors of exclusion, their prevalence and co-occurrence patterns.

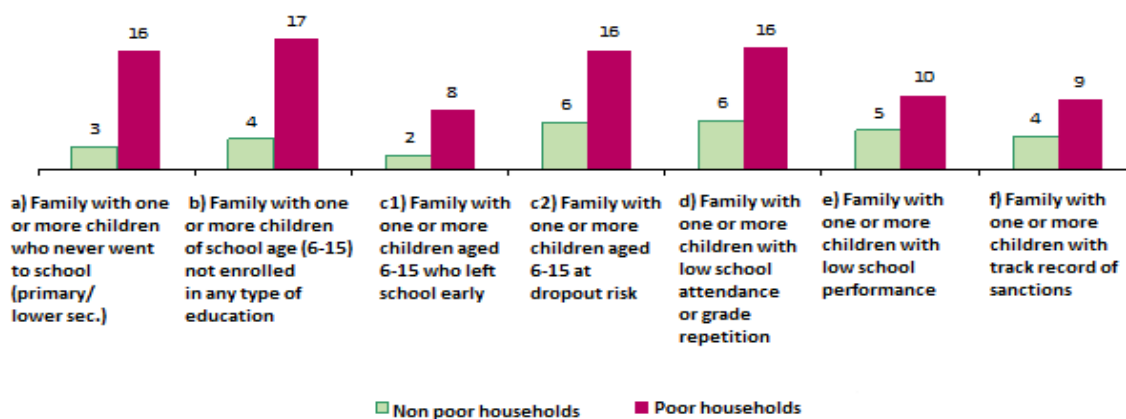


Source: Tesliuc et al. 2015, 32

²³ Stănculescu et al. (coord.) (2016). The areas designated as sub-localities may refer to a neighborhood, a street, a group of houses and/or apartment buildings, in urban areas, whereas to an entire village, a hamlet or a single group of houses, in rural areas.

²⁴ The European Commission (2018: 4).

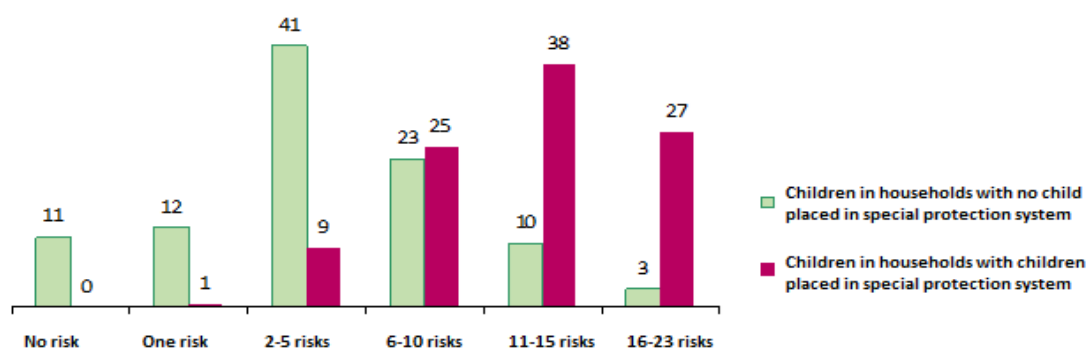
Figure 3. Education Related Risks among Romanian Children Living in Poverty in Rural Areas (% of Households).



Source: The World Bank, Community census of families with children from 30 source rural communities (September-October 2018). Note: non-poor households (N=4,637); poor households (N=1,203).

The proposed EWM, as well as the design of associated tools were informed by the data on the co-occurrence of the known ESL risk factors yielded by the community census of families with children in 30 source communities. Out of all surveyed households 85 percent displayed at least one of the risks listed in the EWM Observation Sheet (Annex I), and the majority (69 percent) displayed two or more risks at the same time, including poverty, occasional employment in the informal sector, precarious living conditions, parents' illiteracy, children's absenteeism or school dropout, inadequate parental skills, domestic violence, increased risk of child neglect and abuse (against a backdrop of the parents' alcohol abuse), minor parents, single parents, marital instability, various unfortunate events, such as the death of one parent, severe accident, imprisonment of one of the parents, low expectations and self-esteem, as well as helplessness. Knowing that education-related risks are typically part of a wider complex of vulnerabilities, it should be concluded that education interventions will be effective only if delivered as part of integrated interventions concerning the family's financial situation, housing conditions, health, social status, etc.

Figure 4. Children Living in Households in 30 Rural Communities by Number of Risk Factors and Household Type (% of Children)



Source: The World Bank, Community census of families with children from 30 source rural communities (September—October 2018). Note: children in households with no children in SPS (N=11,400); children in households with children in SPS and at home (N=362). SPS = special protection system.

1.3 Review of Current Practices in EU Countries Implementing ESL Prevention Mechanisms

This section comprises a summary of the ESL prevention practices in nine European countries, namely: Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Holland, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden and the United Kingdom. The ESL rate in the selected countries ranges between the EU-28 minimum and average values, making them relevant for identifying successful practices in preventing ESL; as several of these countries also have numerous ethnic and linguistic minorities or immigrant communities, their experience is particularly relevant to the Romanian case.²⁵ Annex II of this document provides detailed information for each of these countries.

The comparative analysis of policies addressing early leaving reveals that successful approaches include a mix of prevention, intervention and compensation measures, in line with the EU recommendations. All the education and training systems that were analyzed here have early warning systems underpinned by a decentralized approach and accompanied by national regulations, strategic documents, and monitoring and evaluation systems. Other common key characteristics of these systems are a high degree of parental involvement and close coordination among the relevant ministries and agencies, as well as between central and local institutions.

Collaboration among institutions is not limited to policy making, but also focuses on ongoing exchange of information and reference systems to render all planned interventions for children and youth at risk as efficient as possible. Thus, all the countries that have successfully managed to prevent and reduce ESL invest in multidisciplinary intervention teams including various experts – psychologists, speech therapists, teaching staff, support teachers, educators, child protection specialists, social workers or caseworkers, etc. – who directly interact with both the child at risk and his or her family. The experience of these countries shows that even where adequate policies and an early warning system (used to identify and assess children at risk) exist, ESL prevention and reduction become effective only if backed by an integrated intervention, in which the school does not operate in isolation, but collaborates with the other institutions and local specialists, parents and children at risk. All countries finance policies related to ESL from the national budget, with variable contributions from local budgets, as well as through European projects. The latest report on the structural indicators for monitoring education and training systems in Europe shows that Romania has already adopted the majority of the policies to address early school leaving, as shown in *Table 2*.²⁶ The major difference between Romania and all the nine selected (and many other) European countries lies in the low funds allotted to education (*Figure 2*), including ESL-related policies and programs.

Table 2. ESL Prevention and Reduction Policies in Romania and Nine Other European Countries

Policies for preventing ESL:	BE/ FR	BE/ DE	BE/ NL	HR	NL	AT	PL	PT	SI	SE	UK	RO
1. National data collection on ELET based on Student Register	X		X		X	X	X	X		X	X	
2. Policies for increasing flexibility and permeability of education pathways								X				
2.1. Providing alternative education and training pathways	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
2.2. Facilitating transitions within education and training system	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X

²⁵ Eurostat data on ESL in 2017: England - 10.6 percent, Austria - 7.4 percent, Belgium - 8.9 percent, Croatia - 3.1 percent, Holland - 7.1 percent, Poland - 5 percent, Slovenia - 4.3 percent and Sweden - 7.7 percent, EU-28 - 10.6 percent. To compare, the ESL rate in Romania was 18.1 percent.

²⁶ Eurydice (2018).

Policies for preventing ESL:	BE/ FR	BE/ DE	BE/ NL	HR	NL	AT	PL	PT	SI	SE	UK	RO
2.3. Recognizing skills and/or qualifications	X	X	X				X	X	X	X		X
3. Policies for language support for students with a different mother tongue	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4. Policies encouraging the inclusion of ELET in ITE and/or CPD	X	X	X		X	X		X	X			
5. Education and career guidance in schools, ISCED 2 & 3	X		X			X	X	X	X	X		X
6. Policies to support ELET re-enter the education and training system								X				
6.1. Second chance education	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
6.2. Education and career guidance	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
6.3. Youth Guarantee	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X

Source: Eurydice (2018). Note: ELET = Early leavers from education and training; Indicator 4. concerns the policies and measures designed to enhance the teacher’s capacity to understand the challenges of early school leaving, by way of initial teacher education (ITE) and continuing professional development (CPD); BE = Belgium, HR = Croatia, NL = The Netherlands, AT = Austria, PL = Poland, PT = Portugal, SI = Slovenia, SE = Sweden, UK = United Kingdom, RO = Romania.

Concerning signals included in the early warning systems, all countries focus on three critical categories: (a) absenteeism; (b) student achievement (grades), special focus on learning difficulties and grade repetition; and (c) student behavior in school. There are clear variations in operationalizing early warning signals to better plan efficient interventions. The most notable differences may be observed in the thresholds. For instance, in Poland, parents are notified about unacceptable child’s absences only when reaching or exceeding 50 percent of classes per month. In contrast, in the French communities in Belgium, schools must notify parents as soon as student absences exceed 9 half-days in primary and 31 half-days in lower secondary education. Schools’ responses to “at risk” identified cases differ depending on the type of warning signals received, as well as a set of causes/risk factors identified during assessment. In all cases all types of responses are individual, and approaches to ESL reduction may be extremely creative. For example, teenagers and youth who left school early are reintegrated in school and involved as mentors for students at risk to share their experiences.

Box 1. Summary of the ESL Early Warning Systems in the Nine Selected European Countries

<p>Austria is one of 3 countries in Europe that have developed EWS as a separate system from other management and monitoring systems. The Ministry of Education developed in 2013 (updated 2016) Austria’s National Strategy for Preventing Early School Leaving. The strategy is founded on the principles of prevention, intervention and compensation.</p>	<p>The Netherlands. The EWS is applied regionally through a comprehensive strategy entitled Drive to Reduce Dropout Rates. A budget to address ESL is allocated to each region, and schools receive performance related funding for contributing to the reduction of ESL. A formal multi-level cooperation body was established to enhance synergies between government departments and local authorities and to strengthen commitment to ESL prevention.</p>
<p>Belgium. The EWS is implemented regionally where each of the French, Flemish, and German communities have their own system and activities. Inter-governmental partnerships and collaborative approaches are instrumental in preventing ESL.</p>	<p>Poland does not have a centralized Early Warning System, but there are national level policies and strategies such as the Education Act of 1991 and the Strategy for the Development of Human Capital. The Education Act places the responsibility on schools that must develop their own EWS and procedures of intervention compatible with general regulations and tailored to the local needs. Schools are free to choose the design and implementation methods. Collaborative approaches between national agencies, local authorities and schools have also been instrumental in preventing ESL.</p>

<p>Croatia has a dedicated EWS governed by several education decrees such as the Primary and Secondary Education Act and the National Standards for Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education. EWS in Croatia is decentralized and is based on delegating the responsibility to schools for identifying and managing distress signals.</p>	<p>Slovenia does not have a dedicated national strategy or program to address ESL. Early warning systems are an integral part of school monitoring and management systems. These long-standing general policies and measures may explain the historically low ESL rates.</p>
<p>United Kingdom. EWS in the UK places responsibility on schools. Government departments collaborate with local authorities and schools within the framework defined by the national strategy to prevent early school leaving and maximize the engagement of young people in education, Building Engagement, Building Futures (2011). The strategy was developed jointly by the Department of Education, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Department for Work and Pensions. Collaboration between the Department of Education and Department of Work and Pension, and local authorities and schools contributes to reducing ESL.</p>	<p>Sweden. The educational system is decentralized, giving most of the responsibilities to municipalities. Sweden does not have a centralized EWS even though there are national level policies such as the Education Act. EWSs are implemented locally through municipalities and schools. The Education Act of 2011 obligates schools to put in place EWSs. Schools are free to choose the design and implementation methods, which has led to a number of innovations and success stories. Even though the school is the center for EWS, multi-agency partnerships, and collaborative approaches between national agencies, municipalities and schools have also been instrumental in preventing ESL.</p>
<p>Portugal does not have an EWS, but a nationwide network of commissions for protecting at risk children and youth is in place and it is managed by municipalities. These commissions implement a collaborative approach between education, social and other local authorities and civil society. At school level, multidisciplinary teams comprising counsellors, psychologists, social workers and mediators support students and groups facing difficulties. In some cases, when learning difficulties are more severe, additional resources are deployed to involve external specialized therapists who come to schools to support students. Different nationwide programs run by the Ministry of Education are specifically designed for territories, schools, classes or pupils that are at risk of ESL or that are performing below target. The main focus of these programs is on providing extra support to pupils (academic, personal, social) inside and outside the classroom in the form of mentoring and tutoring, intercultural mediation, guidance and vocational experiences.</p>	

A typical response to ESL, as highlighted above, is an integrated intervention carried out by multidisciplinary teams working with children at risk and their families. In some countries multidisciplinary teams work at the school level. In other countries they function at community level. There also may be mobile teams assisting groups of communities and schools in providing additional, often specialized, support services. Nevertheless, multidisciplinary teams usually include specialists from social services, healthcare and education areas. At the same time, a typical ESL response also includes a teacher training and professional development component aimed at enhancing the teachers' understanding of ESL and their skills for identifying and working with students at ESL risk and their families. In addition, in countries which successfully prevented and reduced ESL, a typical response is often implemented in relatively well-equipped schools which, in general, provide support and counseling to all children and their families, regardless of ethnicity, mother tongue, religion, financial means, health conditions or other characteristics. The detailed review of ESL practices in EU countries is presented in Annex II.

1.4 Strategies, Policies and Measures to Reduce ESL in Romania

In terms of policies, Romania seems well positioned to reduce early school leaving (see *Table 2*).²⁷ It has more policy instruments for ESL reduction than Croatia, but the ESL rate in Romania is nearly six times higher than in Croatia. The high ESL rate is accompanied by an increasing number of out-of-school children. Given that Romania's ESL policies do not deliver their intended outcomes as well as in other countries, within the constraints of the available data, it has to be mentioned that the way current ESL policies are designed,

²⁷ Eurydice (2018).

implemented, financed and coordinated with policies from other relevant sectors (especially social policies) is inefficient.

As of 2015, Romania has a National Strategy for Reducing ESL rate to 11.3 percent by 2020, while also ensuring equal access to quality education for all children. One of the preventive measures proposed in the Strategy focuses on developing an early warning system with measures and actions dedicated to students in lower secondary education who are at risk of ESL. At present, there is no early warning system in place. Nonetheless, there are several platforms managed at the national level for collecting data provided by schools (e.g. SIIIR or data collected by ARACIP). Also, the Romanian Government has been implementing for several years various intervention and compensation measures and programs addressing school dropout and early school leaving, such as School after School (SAS) and Second Chance (SC) programs, Croissant and Milk program for pre-school and primary school students, school supplies program, social vouchers for kindergartens and MONE for High School program. Educational support services,²⁸ as well as career counseling and guidance programs have been developed and are available in all counties, albeit insufficient in relation to needs.

Current regulations and procedures allow the coordination between schools and relevant authorities, as well as NGOs at the central and local levels to help students to complete their education. In December 2016, an institutional protocol was signed among MMJS, MONE and MOH for the development and implementation of integrated community services (social, healthcare, education, employment and housing) as part of a project financed from EU funds. The protocol stipulates setting up a local team comprising social worker, community nurse or sanitary mediator, and school counselor or school mediator to collaborate with local authorities, schools and families.

However, funds allocated to education, including ESL-related policies and programs, visibly place Romania behind other European countries. *Figure 2* shows that Romania has consistently allocated significantly lower funds to education and training than the EU average, especially to early child education and care, which have a defining role in preventing early school leaving.²⁹ Apart from underfunding, the current per-capita funding formula is not responding to the actual needs of schools, especially those located in areas affected by demographic decline, as well as those located in poorly developed regions. In addition, as pointed out in the WB's Public Finance Review (2018), the system of complementary finding by local authorities tends to favor schools in richer municipalities, reinforcing inequalities.

In addition to the national and local government programs, various public and private institutions and NGOs have implemented several school dropout and ESL prevention and reduction projects primarily financed from European funds, especially from 2007 onwards. Thus, on March 31, 2019, there were 129 projects contracted as part of HCOP,³⁰ amounting in total to more than 160 million Euro.³¹ And the current HCOP projects are added to the projects funded during the previous programming period (2007—2013) via SOPHRD, 169 projects overall with a total budget in excess of 389 million Euro.³² The European projects intended to prevent and reduce early school leaving in Romania have, therefore, received substantial financial support.

²⁸ The Support Educational Services within CJRAE provide: (a) Drawing up/revising curriculum adjustments and the tailored intervention plan, in collaboration with teachers in class; (b) Educational and therapeutic-recovery support for children/pupils with SEN integrated in mainstream educational establishments; (c) Support through specific therapies for children/pupils with learning difficulties, development difficulties, adaptation difficulties, behavioral disorders, mental, physical and neuromotor deficiencies, sensory deficiencies, etc.; (d) Notification of and counseling for families of children with SEN on the matter of their children's education; (e) Informing and counseling the teaching staff on matters of inclusive education.

²⁹ The European Commission (2019a: recom. 13).

³⁰ Priority Axis 6, PI10i: Reducing and preventing ESL and promoting equal access to quality pre-school, primary and secondary education, also to formal, non-formal and informal learning pathways for re-entering education and training <http://data.gov.ro/dataset/proiecte-contractate/resource/f32ce75b-9137-441e-830f-0210bcefe4d4>.

³¹ The value of HCOP contracts, signed until March 31, 2019, for reducing and preventing early school drop-out, calculated by the authors at Euro/leu exchange rate of July 5, 2019 (EU funding, the public budget and the beneficiary's own contribution).

³² Priority Axis 2, Key Area of Intervention (KAI) 2.2: Prevention of early school leaving. Value calculated by the authors at exchange rate of 4.3438 lei/Euro, provided as reference in the Applicant's Guide, specific conditions (June 2013 version), available at: <http://old.fonduri-ue.ro/finantari/linii-de-finantare/resurse-umane..>

Unfortunately, without clear definitions, methodologies and procedures evenly applied across the country, and given the lack of reliable databases on potential beneficiaries, the outcomes of these projects cannot be thoroughly measured. But while available data does not allow measuring the actual impact of these projects, the ESL situation could have been worse in the absence of projects and initiatives implemented in the past few years.

The EU funded projects are supplemented by other projects financed by international donors, such as the Norwegian funds, the Swiss funds, the UNICEF Romania, the World Bank, etc. Given the high number of projects, two challenges should be noted: (i) the complex process of coordination and alignment of many actions implemented at the same time which involves various institutional players across the country; (ii) the evaluation process of these projects based on OECD/DAC relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability criteria.

Short of a comprehensive assessment, the analysis of the information collected during the EWM-related consultation process revealed that the already completed projects include: large strategic projects, surveys, methodologies, identification, assessment, intervention and monitoring models, models of integrated services either within schools or via school–community (and other local institutions) teams, piloting various models and interventions in two to three schools, employing teams of experts who develop innovative methods adapted to the local setting. Still, many of the proposed and piloted models have only been implemented in isolation and do not benefit from impact assessments. Moreover, exchanges of best practices or forums and events debating the various models are rare, in the absence of an institutionalized mechanism for replicating and scaling up models that have solid positive outcomes and turning them into policies funded and promoted nationwide.

On the other hand, the discussions with experts from both central and local levels revealed “a project fatigue” caused by the fact that “everybody implements School after School” or “everybody implements the Second Chance” programs, with a low sustainability and survival rate. For example, the analysis of the qualitative data collected by MONE in 2018 to monitor the Strategy to Reduce Early School Leaving reveals that, out of a sample group comprising 93 lower secondary schools, only 20 provided, School after School (SAS) programs at some point prior to the survey, but only one school was still implementing it at the time of the survey. Similarly, the Second Chance (SC) program was at some point available in 20 schools, but was still at the time of the survey only in 3 schools.³³ The main reason behind stopping the programs was the lack of funding, as well as (in the case of SC) a very low number of beneficiaries, the lack of available space or teacher workload.

Annex II presents in more detail projects implemented in schools using integrated teams, including services provided by the school counselor, psychologist, mediator or facilitator, teaching staff, or with an integrated team within the community, including services provided by professional social workers, community nurses and other local or county-level specialists. These projects were properly carried out and achieved expected outcomes. However, they could not be continued given that funds and experts were no longer available after the project closure. During local consultations, many of those interviewed reacted to the plans for an integrated EWM with disbelief: “keep dreaming that MONE will provide for all this, we’ve stopped dreaming a while ago, as good things come and go like rain.” (Focus group with teachers.)

The majority of projects implemented in Romania were developed taking into consideration the international experience. Thus, they employed the ESL early warning signals most commonly used worldwide: (a) absences, particularly unexcused ones; (b) academic achievement, with special focus on learning difficulties and grade repetition; and (c) the students’ behavior in school. Several instruments were developed for the assessment phase, often by experts with rich experience of working with disadvantaged groups. Models of preventive measures, models of training courses for the teaching staff and other specialists, in addition to models of interventions, based on teams and packages of services, including

³³ World Bank (2019). Surveyed schools were randomly selected from among the 1,238 schools in the country with a unit grade average below 6 following the 2018 National Assessment Exam.

integrated services, were developed and piloted. Monitoring and evaluation models, however, were rare, as most projects had to comply with sponsors' rules.

Despite the large number of projects, it is not clear whether they have had a deep penetration at the local level involving a sufficient number of schools to secure the critical mass required for a structural change of the system. The anecdotal evidence and the qualitative data do not seem to indicate the existence of a critical mass of affected schools. For example, educational support and inclusive school services are still largely believed to be the responsibility and duties of experts, such as those at County Centers for Educational Resources and Assistance (CJRAE), rather than a way of thinking or a feature of the organizational culture that needs to be cultivated and spread across schools and whole communities. And discriminating attitudes towards various vulnerable groups are still widespread and entrenched.

The development of inclusive school models has been successfully promoted by UNICEF Romania through the Quality Inclusive Education Package, by World Vision Romania and by the Impreuna Agency through different projects developed in partnership with other non-governmental organizations. Details of these interventions are provided in Annex II.

Precisely to ensure the critical mass required for a systemic change, MONE has been carrying out the four-year project CRED (Relevant Curriculum, Open Education for All) since 2017, in partnership with the Institute of Educational Sciences. CRED is expected to contribute to the prevention of ESL, by implementing systemic measures of innovative and sustainable implementation of a new national curriculum that proposes increasing access to quality learning experiences for primary and lower secondary students, a competence-based unitary curricular approach to ensure equal opportunities for students from disadvantaged groups, including for students in second chance programs.³⁴ In addition to revising the curriculum, CRED project intends to train the total of 55,000 (40,000 primary and 15,000 secondary) teachers in the use of innovative teaching methods.

Despite discussed limitations, in Romania there is a growing trend of creating and piloting ESL prevention and reduction initiatives. However, the life of each initiative is usually limited by the period of secured funding. This is why most interventions do not scale up to national practices, methodologies and procedures that could be systematically applied to the benefit of groups of children and young people at risk across the country. In this respect, several participants in the consultations underlined the need for building on different experiences and promoting a national approach, especially within the context of the upcoming European funds programming period (as of 2021).

³⁴ <https://www.creatorideeducatie.ro/proiectul-cred/>.

2 The Proposed Early Warning Mechanism (EWM) in Romania

The proposed EWM includes prevention, intervention and compensation components, operational procedures and a toolkit with all the necessary instruments to be used by all relevant stakeholders to prevent and reduce early school leaving. The EWM has a distinct institutional structure (subsection 2.4) and an action plan (section 6).

As it has already been established, Romania has an almost complete policy framework for preventing and reducing ESL. Various programs to support the participation of children from disadvantaged groups are in place: Croissant and Milk, School Supplies, School after School. There is a network of school counselors, even if insufficiently developed.³⁵ What is missing, according to the structural indicators monitored by Eurydice, are: (i) clear and mandatory procedures for collecting data on groups at risk of ESL, and (ii) a comprehensive intervention mechanism involving School Inspectorates and schools and ensuring coordination of specialists and implementation of policies and programs. The proposed EWM addresses these shortages. The EWM is designed in accordance with best practice from European countries that have successfully prevented and reduced ESL (summarized in subsection 1.3 and detailed in Annex II), also taking into consideration the experience of different Romanian initiatives. The resulting mechanism is multilevel, and it addresses the need to involve and coordinate many actors at the central, county and local levels from education and social sectors.

2.1 EWM Approach

The proposed EWM is fully aligned with the Romanian Constitution and the National Education Law no. 1/2011 that stipulate the right to education, as well as with the provisions of the European Union's Charter of Fundamental Rights. At the same time, the EWM is elaborated within the wider context of the national policies for the promotion of children's rights.

Since 2015, Romania has had a national legislative framework (GD 691/2015) stipulating the methodology, tools and actions related to monitoring and analysis tasks centered on the status of children (and their families), by identifying the following risks that may affect children and therefore require the provision of support in the form of services and/or benefits:

- a) family financial status;
- b) family social status;
- c) family members' health conditions;
- d) family members' level of education, including school dropout and early school leaving;
- e) family living conditions;
- f) risk behaviors identified within family.

GD 691/2015 lays the main responsibility for dealing with these risks on the public social assistance services (SPAS) at the *comuna (commune)*, town and municipality level, who collaborate with the general directorates for social assistance and child protection (DGASPC). Both in order to identify children at risk and plan and carry out interventions, SPAS representatives should collaborate with local professionals who, in their professional capacity, come into contact with the child, such as the family physician, teaching staff, registered nurse, school mediator, and sanitary mediator.

The proposed EWM is based on the current legislative framework, specifically the GD 691/2015, including the changes proposed for its improvement under another WB technical assistance activity. Also, the EWM is designed in line with the unitary methodology for elaborating development plans for prevention and support community services for children and family, also developed by the World Bank under a separate

³⁵ In Romania, the ratio of pupils to school counselors is 800:1, as compared with the 250:1 ratio recommended by the American School Counselor Association.

activity. At the same time, this EWM proposes new tools which improve the instruments available in the current legislation.

The EWM approach to responding to actual or potential causes of ESL and school dropout rests on five pillars: (1) multidisciplinary approach; (2) collaboration among institutions from different sectors and levels; (3) measures at school level to improve education quality and school climate; (4) interventions by levels of severity; and (5) training of specialists, especially teachers. This approach is expected to ensure the EWM capacity to address a wide variety of possible combinations of causes and risk factors of ESL. It cannot be emphasized enough that for the EWM to be effective, services provided at the school level are key. If the critical mass of schools is not involved in this program, it will be close to impossible to implement intervention plans for significant numbers of students at risk or compensation measures for out-of-school children and youth.

Figure 5. Five Pillars of EWM Response at the Student/Child Level



Pillar 1: Multidisciplinary approach

The international experience shows that the multidisciplinary approach is the only effective way to reduce ESL. ESL is triggered by a complex set of causes, hence only a multidisciplinary team of experts can address – in a holistic way – the needs of children and youth at risk of ESL or those who already dropped out of school. This is why all countries with a history of successful ESL reduction and prevention invest in multidisciplinary and integrated teams comprising experts – psychologists, speech therapists, teachers, support teachers, educators, experts in child protection, social workers, etc. – who work directly with children at risk and their families. Investment in multidisciplinary teams may be costly, especially for rural schools and communities with limited resources. To limit costs, some countries use mobile expert teams to assist schools and local authorities in a micro region (group of towns or villages). This experience shows that it is vital to train as many local experts as possible (especially in rural communities) who understand the early school leaving and dropout phenomena and can work with children at risk and their families.

Pillar 2: Collaboration

A two-tier collaboration is envisaged, institutional collaboration and collaboration with other key stakeholders. The institutional collaboration is to be ensured at both central and local level. A close coordination of relevant ministries and central and local agencies is a key common feature of all education and training systems in countries that have successfully reduced ESL. Collaboration among institutions should not be limited only to policy making, but it should also include ongoing information exchanges and development of inter-institutional reference systems to ensure effectiveness of planned interventions for children and youth at risk. Cooperation among education, healthcare and social services at the central and county levels is vital for schools and local authorities to be able to jointly take effective actions against ESL. A strengthened collaboration at community level is equally important, especially with Social Assistance

Public Service and integrated community services (ICS) teams³⁶ The involvement of other key stakeholders such as parents and civil society organizations, which range from NGOs to informal or religious groups within communities will be an important factor contributing to the success of the EWM implementation.

Pillar 3: Prevention measures

The EWM proposes a set of measures differentiated by level of severity, as follows:

- **Level 1** comprises prevention measures aiming at improving education quality and school climate to benefit all students.

Pillar 4: Interventions differentiated by level of severity

- **Level 2** considers students at ESL risk with low school attendance or learning difficulties, etc.
- **Level 3** considers interventions for students displaying several warning signs at the same time, such as high absenteeism and low academic achievement.
- **Level 4** considers students who accumulated several risk factors, such as absences, poor academic achievement or inadequate behaviors in school caused by abuse, neglect, violence, child exploitation, possibly associated with severe poverty, lack of or poor housing conditions, health issues, disability, SEN, etc.

While level 1 interventions can be implemented at school level by school staff, level 2 and 3 interventions usually require collaboration between teams in schools and other experts in the education system (counselor, school psychologist, CJRAE experts, etc.). Level 4 interventions can only be implemented through a multidisciplinary team whereby school representatives (and representatives of the education system) collaborate with social workers, physicians, and other experts in the community who are outside the education system.

Pillar 5: Training teachers

As policies and measures to enhance teachers' understanding of ESL related challenges through initial and continuing training and professional development is one of the few gaps in the Romanian ESL policy framework (*Table 2*), it is very important to train teachers and other experts in the education system on topics such as:

- ESL and related challenges;
- working with students at ESL risk;
- how to bring out-of-school children and youth to school;
- working with families of children and youth who left school or who are at risk of ESL;
- multidisciplinary approaches, integrated intervention and working in multidisciplinary teams;
- student-centered learning;
- creating a positive learning environment in the classroom;
- fighting against discrimination, violence, abuse and neglect;
- mobilizing and enabling the community;
- adopting methods targeting children with behavioral issues;
- supporting diversity and tolerance in school.

Training teachers on ESL related topics should however be complementary to regular teacher training on subject knowledge and pedagogical competencies to equip teachers better respond to students' needs. Training on similar ESL topics is also required for other specialists who should be part of multidisciplinary teams, such as social workers, healthcare providers, recovery and rehabilitation services, mediators as well as other service providers.

³⁶ Order MLSJ 393/630/4236/2017 establishing a collaboration protocol for the implementation of integrated community services (ICS) to fight social exclusion. An ICI team³⁶ comprises a social assistant, a community health assistant, a health mediator for Roma communities, a school counsellor and a school mediator.

2.2 EWM Target Groups

The development of a warning system entails the existence of a coherent methodological framework for the warning and intervention mechanism, as well as of specialized human resources, capable of providing competent services. At present, Romania lacks clear and mandatory procedures for the collection of data on groups at school leaving risk. However, any policy or measure designed to prevent or reduce early school leaving, including an EWM, has to address the following target groups of children and youth: students (all education levels) at school dropout risk; school-age children (6-17 years old) outside the education system (having never been enrolled at any school, having dropped out of left school at an early stage); and youth aged 18-24 who completed no more than the eighth grade and have not enrolled in any other form of education or vocational training.

Two further clarifications regarding ESL policy target groups must be made. First, while EWM differentiates among distinct target groups within the current student population, students in any given school are not split into students at risk and students safe from risk. Therefore, the first step should be to identify the group of children neither at school, nor out-of-school, hereafter called students in process of dropping out (also see *Infographic 2*). These children no longer attend school but remain registered in school documents and may be declared dropouts. However, at school level, the process of registering dropouts varies depending on the interpretation and application of the current legislation.³⁷ This situation was documented in a UNICEF funded project undertaken by Împreună Community Development Agency across compact Roma communities, and these results were reconfirmed by the qualitative research conducted by MONE in 2018, in 93 schools (not only from Roma communities), as well as during the consultation process on the proposed EWM in Călărași and Ialomița counties. Thus, according to the interviews with principals, schools use definitions that either are very vague or use arbitrary figures to establish school dropout.

Therefore, the first step is to correctly identify students in process of dropping out who figure in school documents, but no longer attend classes. To that end, schools should provide accurate data to SIIR concerning: (i) children no longer enrolled in the current academic year; (ii) those marked with "incomplete academic year" or those marked in red (dropped out of school during the first or the second term); (iii) children who have not attended classes a single day since the start of the academic year (data to be filled out at the end of the 1st term and at the end of the academic year), and may have been declared "repeat students"; (iv) children who are no longer enrolled at school and have exceeded the 3 years beyond the grade-specific age (they appear as not associated with any form of education).³⁸

The second clarification: EWM considers the children who moved abroad as a distinct target group designated as "migrant children" in *Infographic 1* below. There is a widely shared belief among education experts that was also voiced during consultations, that the high ESL, and even school dropout rates are artificially inflated by including children who moved abroad, because the majority of these children go to school, although not in Romania, but in the European countries to which they migrated. This belief, however, is not backed by data, because neither SPAS, nor the schools possess relevant administrative data. Although these institutions compile reports on children with migrant parents, they do not report on children already living abroad.³⁹ "There are school managers who visited neighbors and took their statements on children who moved abroad, children whom they no longer registered as dropouts so as not to overload the

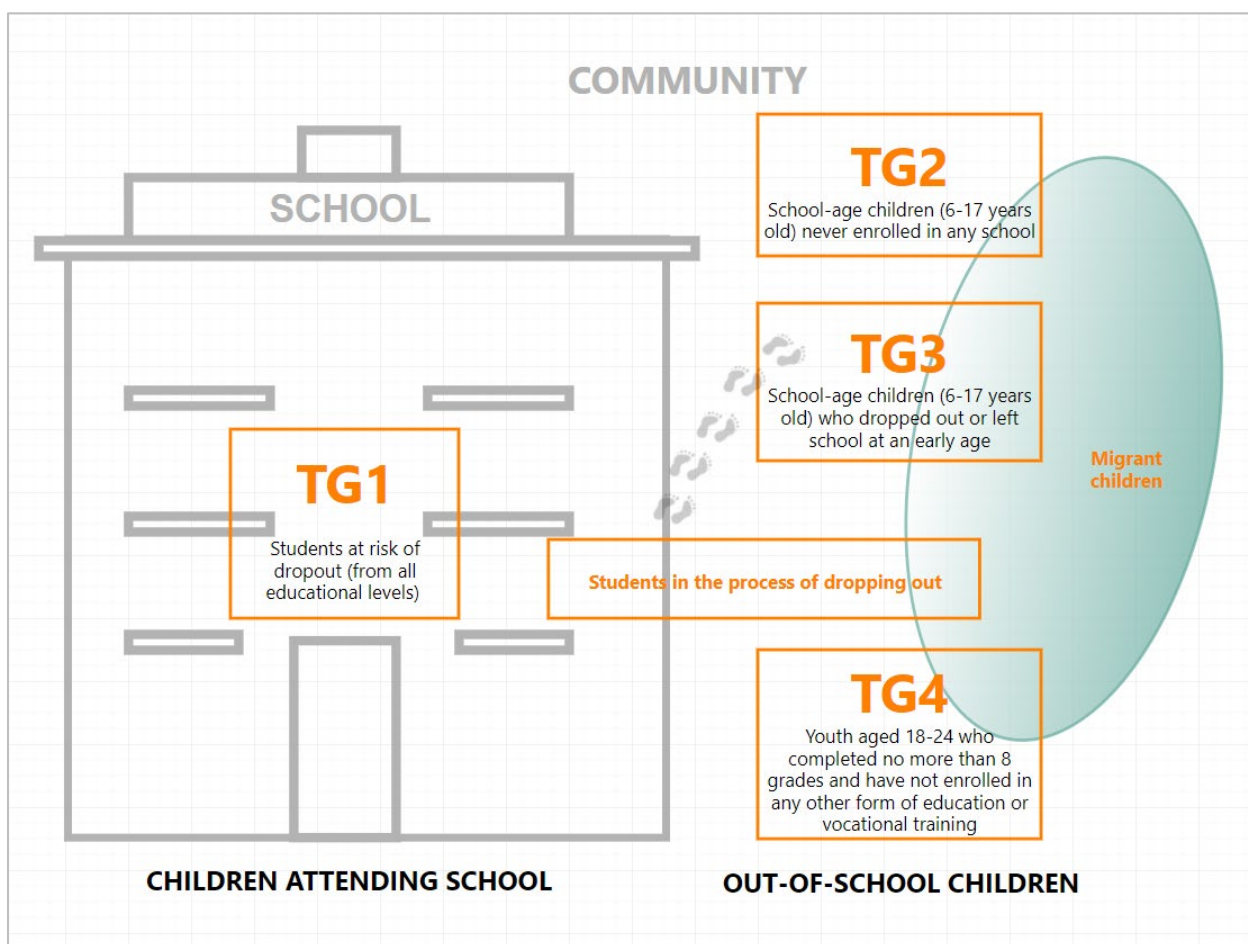
³⁷ Organization and Functioning Regulation for Pre-University Education Units ORDER no. 5079/2016, as subsequently amended in 2018.

³⁸ To be able to remove children from SIIR, a school has to receive from parents a request for transfer or withdrawal. In the case of children starting school, when they advance from kindergarten to pre-school, the school must provide in SIIR the reason why a child does not appear as enrolled with that school. To clarify such cases, the school may search the child by their Personal no. to check whether they enrolled with a different school unit.

³⁹ SPAS and schools use the same *Data registration form on children with parents working abroad and on children who returned to the country after a period of more than one year abroad*. The data collection and harmonization methodology was created by "Salvați Copiii", ANPDCA, MONE, with contributions from the representatives of the Department for Relations with Romanians Abroad – the Presidential Administration and of other institutions, as part of the Inter-institutional Working Group for Children with Migrant Working Parents, set up by the Presidential Administration and methodologically supported by Salvați Copiii Organization.

records with them” (MONE representative). There are no clear correlations between the administrative data registers such as personal records offices and the data on school enrollment. There is no information on the children who left, those who returned, since parents fail to report these cases and local institutions fail to collect such data. Accordingly, it is not certain how many there are, how many of these children actually attend classes in the countries they go to, or when they return. As a matter of fact, school dropout surveys have been highlighting for years that international migration does not pose a significant school leaving risk, “while there are significant reintegration difficulties for children of migrant parents who leave the system, then return when they are older.”⁴⁰

Infographic 1. EWM Target Groups



Only TG1 students actually come to school, whereas, in the case of the other groups, identification, data collection, risk assessment, as well as the actual provision of services can only be done if schools collaborate with other institutions from the community.

To sum up, EWM focuses on a group of children who attend classes - TG1 - students at risk of dropping out and five groups of children and youth out of school (TG2, TG3, students in process of dropping out, migrant children and TG4). There will most likely be overlaps between migrant children and students in process of dropping out. However, as part of the first step, the school must identify students in process of dropping out among enrolled students, strictly based on school records, whether or not they have gone abroad. Migrant children are among the children and youth outside the education and training system, for whom EWM proposes a distinct identification approach described in section 3 of this document.

⁴⁰ Voicu (coord.) (2010: 23).

Within EWM target groups, it is expected to have statistically overrepresented groups of children and youth at a disproportionately high risk of school dropout or early school leaving, particularly: (i) from rural areas and small urban areas; (ii) from marginalized areas, where the risk of having children separated from their families is, likewise, disproportionately high; (iii) of Roma ethnicity; (iv) with special educational needs (SEN) or disabilities; (v) from the special protection system; (vi) lower secondary students, especially 7th and 8th grades; (vii) with migrant parents; and (viii) at social exclusion risk related to poverty, from homeless families, single-parent families, families with numerous children, from illiterate parents, alcoholic parents, with accrued various social risks.

2.3 EWM Description

Following international and national practices for reducing ESL, as well as the existing policy framework, the proposed EWM includes a comprehensive package of measures and actions expected to contribute to early warning and reduction of ESL in Romania. The package of measures and actions is structured around three components: **prevention, intervention and compensation.**

1) Prevention component covers level 1 measures all students can benefit from aiming at increasing the quality of education and the school climate through classroom activities to reduce student absenteeism, dropout, and improve academic achievement. These measures are implemented at school level by teachers, and class masters under the coordination of the school principal.

2) Intervention component covers level 2, 3 and 4 measures depending on the identified ESL risk factors. Depending on the severity level, school staff with the support of other specialists design specific measures for each student identified as being at risk to be delivered under an education services plan. Such measures include provision of counseling services, remedial lessons, mandatory parental counseling and/or education, psychological therapy, as well as any other appropriate activities. When level 2 and 3 measures fail, school decides to move to level 4 measures requiring provision of integrated community services through integrated teams operating at local level.

3) Compensation component addresses out-of-school children and youth (TG 2, 3, students in the process of dropping out, migrant children, and TG 4). The compensation component focuses on measures for reenrollment of students in education and training through provision of dedicated programs and flexible pathways, such as second chance programs, evening classes, reduced frequency classes, initial and continuing vocational education and training.

EWM implementation measures and activities envisaged under each component follow the same sequence of activities (stages): identifying children and young people at risk of early school leaving, assessing ESL risk factors, planning interventions, implementation, monitoring the progress and reporting. At each stage, the following elements are highlighted: (a) activities to be carried out, (b) deadlines or timeline, (c) roles and responsibilities, (d) data and information. All this information is detailed in the EWM Action Plan (Chapter 6), that accompanies the proposed EWM.

The identification of children and youth at ESL risk, as well as responses under the EWM are based on a set of key factors and triggers predicting dropout and ESL in Romania: absenteeism, low grades, grade repetition, and poor behavior.

2.4 EWM Institutional Support Structure

In Romania, the education system comprises more than 18 900 schools from early education to tertiary education with approximately 3.5 million students enrolled in 2018—2019.⁴¹ Compulsory education in Romania consists of primary, lower secondary and the first two years of upper secondary education (grades 9 and 10). According to National Education Law no. 1/2011, compulsory education will be extended to cover the entire upper secondary cycle by 2020. The Ministry of National Education (MONE) is the main government authority in charge of developing, implementing, monitoring and assessing education policies. At the central level, the following key institutions and agencies operate under MONE:

- The Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-university Education (ARACIP) in charge of external evaluation of pre-university education programs and training. ARACIP also provides authorization, accreditation and conducts regular assessments of pre-university education institutions.
- The National Centre for the Development of Vocational Education and Training (CNDIPT) is tasked with developing professional standards, qualifications and curriculum for Initial Vocational Education and Training (IVET) and coordinates implementation of vocational education and training (VET) related policies, strategies and programs.
- The Institute of Education Sciences (ISE) is tasked with providing scientific and analytical support for decision makers and policy makers in the education sector, including curriculum revision in pre-university education (except VET).

At county level, School County Inspectorates (CSI) are responsible for implementing national policies and strategies. CSIs monitor prevention and intervention initiatives and compensation activities to reduce ESL and provide support to schools implementing these measures. County Centers for Educational Resources and Assistance (CJRAE), subordinated to MONE and coordinated by CSIs, provide a) specialized psycho-pedagogical support in county centers or psycho-pedagogical offices; b) speech therapy services through centers and interschool therapy offices; c) education and professional evaluation services; d) mediation services through school mediators; e) advisory services for inclusive through school centers for inclusive education.

The Integrated Information System of Education in Romania (SIIIR) is currently used by the MONE for collecting, validating and analyzing all types of data. The MONE and NIS recently signed an agreement stipulating that SIIIR is the unique database for the pre-university education system. At present, SIIIR allows the collection of data on student, schools, public funds allocated, teachers and relevant national assessment which are relevant for implementing the EWM. This data is structured into several modules and sub-modules, as follows:

Module Schools used to: manage the school network and collect data on group/class/years of study; manage extracurricular activities, partners and consortia.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>School network</i> – variables: internal code (unique code), SIIIR code, fiscal code, SIRUES code, short and long name, SIRUTA code, address, status (legal entity/subordinated), public/private, type of funding, accreditation date and education levels; • <i>School offer</i> – data collected by level of education: type of funding, type of education, second chance (yes/no), instruction language, native language, type of instruction, track – profile – field – specialization/qualification, class.
Module Human Resources allows data collection on teaching staff, auxiliary and non-teaching staff.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Personnel</i>: unique internal code, personal identification number, name, nationality. • <i>Status</i> (active/inactive); • Contact details: E-mail/phone.

⁴¹ SIIIR data, <https://www.siiir.edu.ro/carto/#/statistici>, INS (2019) Press release no. 156.

Module Material Resources (Infrastructure) data collection and management of data on school facilities and utilities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Buildings</i>: year of construction, built area, technical status, seismic risk, classrooms, sanitary permit and other required permits; • <i>Utilities</i>: water source, sewage, gas, Internet connection, garbage collection system, etc.; • <i>Facilities</i>: infrastructure related data (type of masonry, status of facilities, etc.); • <i>Structure and superstructure</i>: type of masonry and other related data; • <i>Classrooms</i>: building code, type of room/level/area (sqm)/ height (m) / no places/ no. PCs and other related data; • <i>Outdoor spaces and areas</i>: internal code /SIIIR code/area (sqm) / type of field and other related data; • <i>Transportation</i>: cod internal code /SIIIR code / type of vehicle/ registration number/ year of purchase/ technical status/ and other related data.
Module Financial Data allows data collection <i>on</i> budgets allocated to schools.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data on budgets, variables: fiscal year/type of budget/ classification/title/quarterly amounts.
Module Enrollment in Kindergarten allows collecting data on enrollment requests and assessment of those requests, and re-enrolment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data (re-)enrollment requests, variables: requester name, residence, contact details, child's name, date and place of birth, citizenship, nationality, residence, disability, orphan/one or both parents, kindergarten network, no. of places available.
Module Statistical Data manages data at school, county school inspectorates and national levels. Data is collected at the school level, and CSIs may visualize and modify the data. Also, CSIs may visualize all data collected in their respective county.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submodule SCO – data by each level of education, including special education; • Submodule standard cost – data collected by each level of education and number of students, rural/urban, language of instruction.

The World Bank's SABER study on the Education Information Management System (EMIS) in Romania highlights several SIIIR limitations regarding the availability, quality and use of data in the decision-making process. In the context of the proposed EWM, it is necessary that the SIIIR be expanded with new modules to allow the collection of data regarding the performance and the presence of students and teachers. This monitoring will be made possible by the introduction of the electronic catalogue for the collection of data on the school progress of the students and their presence in the class to be reported monthly by the school. Moreover, these data will be included in the data collection methodology to be delivered as a separate output under this Agreement and further revised based on a testing exercise in 10 secondary schools nationwide.

The most recent document regulating the management of SIIIR – MONE Order 4371/13.07.2017 – defines how the human resources conducting SIIIR-related activities are organized at all levels – national/county/school – and the activities that should be carried out via SIIIR. Therefore, each school should have a functional in-house Commission, set up on a yearly basis as per school principal's decision, comprising a president (the principal or the deputy principal), a SIIIR administrator (a person with IT skills) and five additional members – secretary and head of human resources, accountant and financial manager, assets administrator and a teaching staff representative.

At county level, a County Commission should be responsible for managing and monitoring the activities carried out through SIIIR, set up on a yearly basis as per decision of the general school inspector. This County Commission should comprise a president (the general school inspector or the deputy general school inspector), a county SIIIR administrator (with IT skills), nine members having school inspector status and at least one representative from the school network, financial and accounting, secretariat-archives, technical

and administrative departments. The County Commission should mandatorily include school inspectors assigned to human resource management, private education and extracurricular activities.

At the national level, a national commission is stipulated for the management, monitoring, and coordination of activities carried out through SIIR. The national commission is set up as per the minister's order and should operate within MONE. The national commission should be presided by the Secretary of State in charge of pre-university education and include, as vice-presidents, the Managing Director of the Directorate General for Pre-university Education Assessment and Monitoring, the Managing Director of the Directorate General for Pre-university Education Management, the Managing Director of the General Economics Directorate, the Director of the Information Technology and Communication Directorate, the Director of the Strategic Management and Public Policies Directorate, the Director of the Pre-university Education Funding Unit. The national commission also includes one secretary and five additional members – directors, heads of service, heads of office, experts, counselors, inspectors within MONE.

The above-mentioned document also stipulates responsibilities consisting in collecting and entering information specific to various SIIR modules provided by the in-house commissions at the school level. The county commission has a related task of checking the accuracy of the data processed and uploaded at the educational establishment level. According to Chapter 4 of this document, the annual school inspection plan must also include monitoring and control activities focused on both the use of SIIR platform and the accuracy of the data uploaded on the platform. If the provisions of MONE Order 4371/13.07.2017 are not complied with, the school units may be subject to disciplinary investigation, with the added administrative liability of the persons in charge. Furthermore, uploading inaccurate data to the platform entails the administrative, civil or criminal liability.

In addition to institutions from the education system, other relevant stakeholders for reducing ESL are institutions with obligations in the areas of social welfare, child protection and social inclusion, as illustrated in *Box 9*.

Local authorities play a key part in financing schools via complementary funds and are responsible for maintaining and developing the physical school infrastructure. The public social assistance services (SPAS) within local authorities provide welfare and financial support to disadvantaged people and protection measures for children and their families. According to the law, they must also identify the needs and draw up plans for services that have to be developed within communities.

In addition to public institutions, formal and informal structures of the civil society, professional associations, parents, youth and children are, likewise, stakeholders able to significantly influence the proper operation and effectiveness of EWM.

Therefore, both the operation and impact of EWM depend on the participation, collaboration and coordination of a wide number of actors at local, county and national levels. However, key EWM institutions do not have common methodologies and mandatory work procedures. Moreover, none of these institutions or organizations holds the leverage needed to reach an inter-institutional agreement on a common draft proposal or its actual implementation. Therefore, the first six months of EWM implementation should be focused on: (i) setting up an institutional support structure for EWM, and (ii) finalizing rules and procedures needed for effective EWM implementation.

The institutional support structure for EWM covers the central, county and local levels. As a first step, capacity at the central and county level needs to be developed, which entails establishing Units of Management and Technical Assistance in Education (UMATE), as presented in *Infographic 2* below.

The **national UMATE** should have functional and decision-making power to ensure coordination, technical support, monitoring and assessment for EWM.

- The lessons learned from previous experiences reveal that EWM should be supported by an **Inter-institutional Committee for Reducing Early School Leaving**, established preferably within the General Secretariat of the Government, with the participation of MONE, MMJS, ANPDCA, MOH, MIA, the Department for Relations with Romanians Abroad, international donors, NGOs

that developed and piloted various school dropout or early school leaving prevention and reduction models or models of services/integrated intervention within communities, as well as teaching staff unions or associations, students' counsels or associations.⁴² Only this type of Committees would be able to mobilize not only the education system players, but also those in the other social sectors, together with the County Councils and mayor's offices from all the territorial-administrative units in the country.

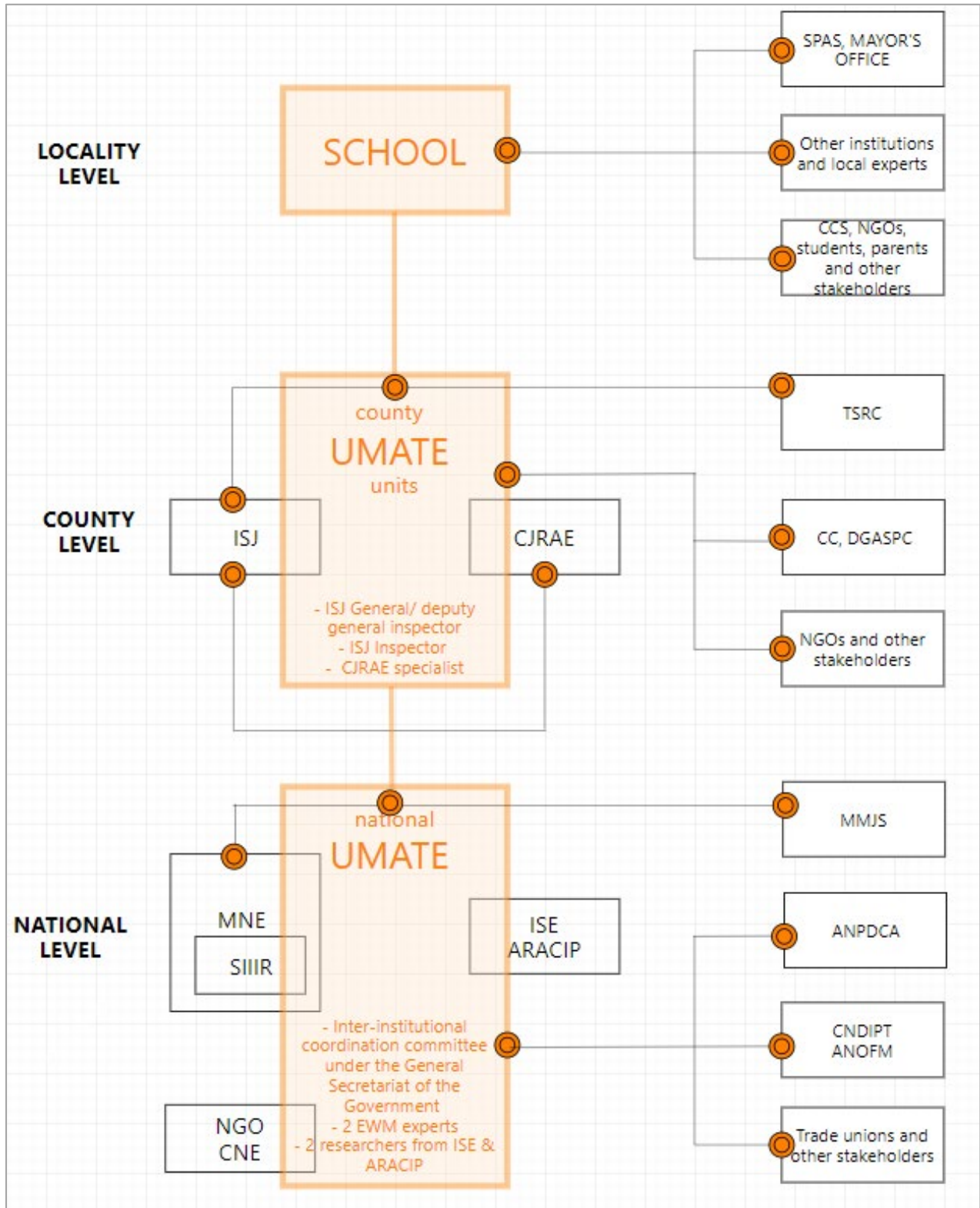
- The national UMATE functional team should benefit from two EWM specialists and two researchers, one from ISE and one from ARACIP. Ideally, the national UMATE team will also include a SIIR administrator, as SIIR will centralize most of the data collected as part of EWM.

The **county UMATE units** should benefit from a team comprising a school inspector from CSI and one CJRAE expert, under the coordination of the General or Deputy General School Inspector. Moreover, an expert with knowledge of and authorized to access SIIR at county level should work closely with the county UMATE team.

At the local level, schools form the institutional network that effectively implements EWM.

⁴² For example, the methodology for collecting and harmonizing data on children with migrant working parents, see also: The Social Program: Opportunity and Responsibility - SPOR (Teșliuc et al., coord., 2016) and the model developed by UNICEF Bacău county, presented in Annex 2.

Infographic 2. EWM Institutional Support Structure



Box 2. Key EWM Stakeholders

CENTRAL LEVEL

MEN	Ministry of National Education - Directorate General for Strategic Management and Public Policies - Directorate General for Pre-university Education Assessment and Monitoring - Directorate General for Pre-university Education Management - Directorate for Information Technology and Communication - Technical Working Group for Education Strategies in charge of monitoring the national strategic frameworks (VET, LLL, Tertiary Education, Investments in School Infrastructure). ⁴³
ARACIP	Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-university Education
ISE	Institute of Education Sciences
CNDIPT	National Centre for the Development of Vocational Education and Training
FSLI	Federation of Teachers' Trade Unions
CNE	National Council of Primary and Secondary School Students
MMJS	Ministry of Labor and Social Justice
ANPDCA	National Authority for the Protection of the Rights of the Child and Adoption
ANR	National Agency for the Roma
ANOFM	National Agency for Employment
ANA	Romanian Anti-Drug Agency

COUNTY LEVEL

CSI	County School Inspectorate
TSRC	Teaching Staff Resource Center
CJRAE	County Center for Educational Resources and Assistance
CC	County Council & County Inclusion Commission
DGASPC	General Directorate for Social Assistance and Child Protection
CPECA	Anti-Drug Prevention, Assessment and Counselling Center

LOCAL LEVEL

School	Schools with all levels of education
SPAS	Public Social Assistance Service & the Mayor's Office (APL)
CCS	Community Consultative Structure ⁴⁴
ONG	Non-government organizations (active in the education field) Informal community groups active in the education field, religious groups parents' associations, teaching staff associations
CSE	School Council of Primary and Secondary School Students or Students' Associations

⁴³ MO no. 3080/2018 on the technical groups set to coordinate the implementation of education strategies.

⁴⁴ Informal groups supporting social welfare activities, set up as per Law no. 272/2004 and GD 49/2011.

2.5 Consultation Process

For the preparation of the proposed EWM, the World Bank team carried out interviews and focus groups with 166 key institutional and political stakeholders, at both central and local levels (*Table 3* below), to collect feedback on the mechanism and the action plan, in terms of:

- General aspects;
- Activities and interventions that need to be changed or added;
- Roles and responsibilities of institutions/organizations under the EWM;
- Proposed timelines;
- What needs to be changed at institutional, regulatory and governance level;
- Human and financial resources needed for an effective EWM implementation;
- Potential risks, barriers, weaknesses of the proposed EWM.

At the central level, the WB team had in depth interviews with relevant staff from the Ministry of National Education and Ministry of Labor, as well as with representatives of several organizations and associations that implemented projects and programs for preventing and reducing dropout/ESL. A list of participating institutions is available in Appendix 1. The team also interviewed key stakeholders from the education, social and health sectors operating at county level: County School Inspectorate, Teachers' House, County Center for Educational Resources and Assistance, General Directorate for Social Assistance and Child Protection, Center for Antidrug Prevention, Evaluation and Counseling.

At the local level, the WB team conducted a field research in ten lower secondary schools in ten urban and rural localities in two counties with the highest ESL rates (Ialomița and Călărași). Within these two counties, five localities were selected in each county: two localities in small towns and three localities in rural areas (communes). Specifically, five schools in each county were selected based on their location (rural/urban) and school's average score at the National Evaluation exam in 2018, applying the following rules: (i) one lower secondary school (with no high school cycle included) per locality; (ii) in urban areas, the selection per county included one school with medium average score and one with low average score; (iii) in rural areas, the selection per county included one school with medium average score and two schools with low average scores.

In each selected locality, a total of five to six interviews and one group discussion were carried out, and were organized with schools, local authorities and NGOs, students and their parents. Thus, the meetings were attended by: school principals, class masters, school counselors, school staff responsible for SIIR, mayors, deputy mayors, representatives of the community consultative structures, social workers or persons with social care responsibilities within social protection services, local NGOs active in the education sector, students and their parents. Also, the team conducted three interviews with students with disabilities and/or SEN and their parents.

Table 3. Number of Interviews and Focus Group Discussions and Participants

County	Level	Total Number of Interviews and Focus Groups	Total Number of Participants
	Central govt. institutions	20	26
Ialomița	- county-level institutions	5	6
	- small urban areas	11	23
	- rural areas	17	47
Călărași	- county-level institutions	4	5
	- small urban areas	10	19
	- rural areas	18	40
Total		85	166

Therefore, the proposed EWM presented in this document reflects the feedback and recommendations provided by all key stakeholders interviewed.

3 EWM Implementation

EWM includes three major components corresponding to the policy framework set out in the Strategy to Reduce Early School Leaving (2015—2020):⁴⁵

- **Component 1 – Prevention** that applies to all schools and the entire student population;
- **Component 2 – Intervention** that targets TG1 - students at risk of dropout (at all levels of education);
- **Component 3 – Compensation** that targets out-of-school children and young people (TG2, TG3, students in process of dropping out, migrant children and TG4).

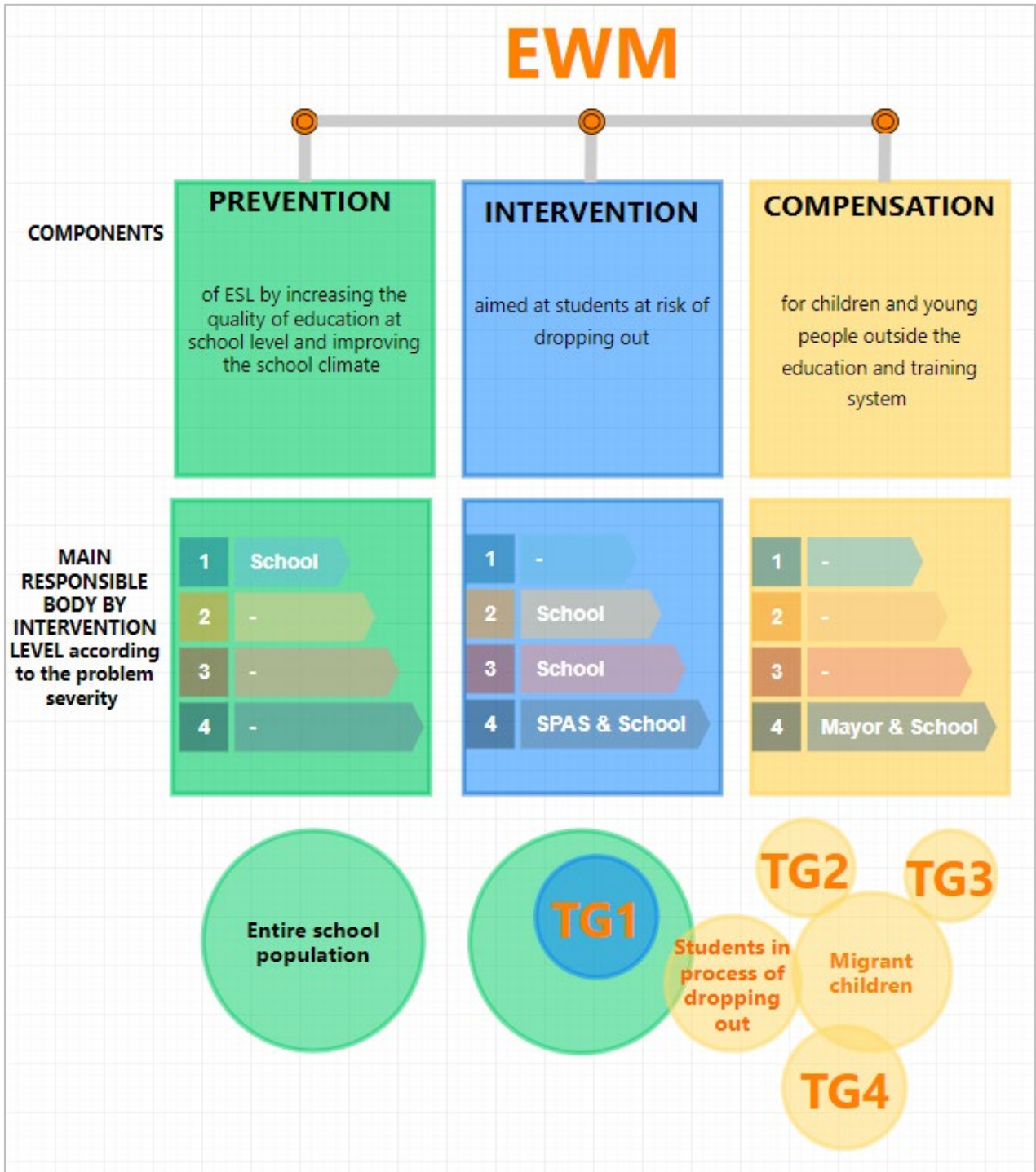
Infographic 3 summarizes the three EWM components and the target groups to which each component is addressed. As detailed in section 3.1, one of the EWM's pillars is differentiation between severity levels. For instance, four levels of severity are proposed for student absences: from having few unexcused absences to being at the verge of dropping out. Thus, EWM prevention component is specific to level 1 measures aimed at increasing the quality of the teaching and learning process and improving school climate, which will benefit all students in the school and not just students at risk. In contrast, the EWM intervention component is dedicated to students who attend school but are identified at risk of early school leaving or dropping out. In their case, the response should be adequate to severity levels 2, 3 or 4. Finally, the EWM compensation component addresses out-of-school children and youth. It is specific to severity level 4, involving complex multiple risks, that cannot be mitigated only by interventions in the field of education carried out by the school but require an integrated response.

The compensation component should be a priority due to large and growing number of children and youth that need to be integrated or reintegrated into education or training. However, in order to establish EWM, all components need to be initiated, especially since some of the required activities, such as data collection, data analysis, hiring and training of specialists or developing the necessary services in schools may require considerable energy and time resources. In the long term, as the ESL rate reaches strategic target or the EU average, it is expected that the EWM focus will shift from compensation to prevention.

According to *Infographic 3*, this chapter is organized into three subchapters corresponding to the three EWM components. Each EWM component includes the sequence of steps related to: identification => assessment => planning measures => implementation and monitoring => reporting and dissemination.

⁴⁵ MONE (2015, Annex II).

Infographic 3. EWM Agencies and Target Groups by Component



3.1 EWM Prevention Component

Prevention measures are considered level 1 measures for enhancing the quality of education and improving school climate, hence addressing the entire school population. Early school leaving is usually a gradual process of distancing from school manifested through signals that in time become more and more diverse. The most commonly used warning signals are: absences, poor school results (school failure) and inappropriate behaviors. The indicators regarding these warning signals can be calculated not only at the student level (individual assessment), but also aggregated, at school level. For example, we calculate the average of unjustified absences per student per school or the average per school for the national assessments or share of students with low grades, etc.

3.1.1 Identification of Students at Risk of ESL

With repeated measurements of the indicators connected to the warning signals over time (from one semester to another or throughout the school years) changes associated with the risk of ESL per school can be identified. Based on these data, it can be assessed whether and to what extent the interventions and activities introduced in a school have contributed to the improvement of the learning environment and to the increase of the students' chances for educational success. Decision to introduce preventive actions with the help of teachers of the school can also be justified with such measurements. Preventive actions have the potential to improve school climate, to create a pleasant and stimulating atmosphere in the classroom, by promoting positive interactions with the students, by motivating them to participate during classes, by learning and personal development. In addition, they lead to the reinforcement at the group level of the concepts of proper behavior, positive behavior, well-being, as well as relationships based on mutual respect and collegiality.

In current practice, absenteeism monitoring is the main early detection measure used by schools. Principals and teachers monitor absences daily based on a standard monitoring record and report them on a monthly basis to the County School Inspectorate (ISJ) and the County Agency for Payments and Social Inspection (AJPIŚ). Absence monitoring is required from schools related to the Milk and Croissant program (at CSI), as well as to the payment of supplementary allowances to families with children that have a net income per family member up to the minimum net salary per economy (at AJPIŚ). Monitoring of school results at school level is frequently done based on the national evaluations. However, most often, unsatisfactory results in these monitoring exercises do not lead to the establishment of preventive measures to improve the quality of education and school climate.

At school level, the performance of all students can be improved when the institution has clearly defined and widely shared goals. This implies not only collaboration between all members of the school community (teachers, pupils, principals and parents), but also developing cooperation and support relationships with the local community (local administration, health and social services, counselors and psychologists, NGOs, sport, leisure and culture institutions, other schools in the area etc.). The way in which the school is functioning should be based on participative management, distributed leadership, inclusive education practices and common concern for teachers' and students' well-being, so that each and every child in that institution feels welcome, safe, happy and confident that he or she can grow and succeed.

Based on the accumulated experience and the data already existing at the school level, the warning signals (absences, grades, behaviors) can be monitored and aggregated at class and school level. If negative developments are identified, the school should decide to carry out classroom activities aimed at reducing absenteeism, improving performance, reducing repetition and dropout rates, as well as solving learning difficulties, and improving student behavior, as clarified below.

SASAT questionnaire. Another method for identifying preventive actions in schools for increasing the quality of education and improving school climate is the SASAT questionnaire.⁴⁶ This tool was developed

⁴⁶ Jasińska-Maciąg & Tomaszewska-Pękała (2017). SASAT = *Success at school assessment tool*.

under the RESL.eu project on decreasing ESL in Europe and based on extensive research involving Poland, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Portugal, Sweden, the Netherlands, Spain, Hungary and Austria. SASAT is a tool that helps schools collect information through questions addressed to students, regarding a number of characteristics that could increase the risk of ESL or school dropout, which cannot be determined based on the administrative data already collected by the school. EWM recommends the use of SASAT.ro instrument based on which the school can identify actions, especially counseling needs, to prevent ESL and school dropout.⁴⁷

SASAT.ro includes the following **nine characteristics** that may be risk factors for ESL and school dropout:

Section A: "You and Your Family"	Students who receive more parental support are more involved in their studies and achieve better educational outcomes.
(A1) Parental social and emotional support	Parents who have higher expectations make more efforts to help their children succeed in school and, at the same time, help increase students' confidence in their skills and influence their educational aspirations.
(A2) Parental school support	
(A4) Parents' expectations concerning students' education	
Section B: "At School"	Students who have a sense of belonging to their school and who believe that education is valuable are, generally, more likely to embrace school values as their own and to be more involved in different school activities, which increases their chances of educational success.
(B1) School belonging	For vulnerable schools in Romania (with relatively high percentage of Roma students), research has shown that the joy of going to school (perceiving the school as a place where ones enjoys going) is the strongest factor influencing school dropout and school performance. ⁴⁸ At the same time, early school leaving, or the accumulation of academic difficulties are often preceded by less obvious signals, such as the low sense of belonging to school and/or low importance given to education. Research has shown that schools that invest in creating a positive and supportive school climate, as well as fighting violence in schools, are more successful in preventing ESL and academic failure. ⁴⁹
(B2) The importance of education	
(B4) Teacher social and emotional support	
(B5) Learning environment in the class	
(B6) Level of peer victimization	

Section C: "Your future plans and aspirations"	Section C: "Aspirations for the future" The educational aspirations and expectations of the students are positively correlated with educational achievements and with chances of academic success.
(C1) Students' educational aspirations	

SASAT.ro (see Annex I) is a tool designed for children aged 11 years and older. It is recommended to use the questionnaire at the school level at the beginning of each school semester, i.e. twice a year, in January and September. The questionnaire will be filled out independently by students, each student filling out their own form. The questionnaire can be administered individually or to the class, ensuring an adequate environment and the supervision of a person (class master, school counselor, psychologist, NGO representative, priest etc.) whom students trust not to share their answers with other teachers, parents, classmates or anyone else. Filling out the questionnaire takes about 15 minutes, but students should be allowed to fill it out at their own pace, without inculcating the feeling of a test or evaluation.

⁴⁷ SASAT.ro is a simplified version of the instrument, which uses 9 characteristics, instead of 12. The following characteristics included in SASAT are not included in SASAT.ro: parental control (A3), academic self-concept (B3) and students' educational expectations (C2). These characteristics have been excluded because the research has shown that some of them are only relevant for some of the countries taking part in the project.

⁴⁸ Ivan and Rostaş (2013a: 14).

⁴⁹ For example, Jasińska-Maciągęk & Tomaszewska-Pękała (2017).

Participation in the SASAT.ro application should be voluntary; the students will be informed that they may decide not to fill it out, entirely or partially. Data privacy rules should be strictly observed. Before organizing data collection, the school should obtain the consent of parents or of legal guardians, which could be requested upon the signing of the Annual Contract. Moreover, it is preferable to prepare the SASAT.ro administration by informing students and parents of the manner of collecting and using the data.

Particular attention should be paid to ensuring impartiality, so that the administration of SASAT.ro does not become another occasion of stigmatizing certain students, especially in groups with disproportionately high risk of ESL or school dropout, such as children from families in extreme poverty, Roma, children with disabilities or SEN or children in the special protection system.

The data may be analyzed at student, class, grade (all students in 5th, 6th grade, etc.) or school level. So that the individual SASAT.ro information could be analyzed, each student has to write their name on the questionnaire, which can lead to confidentiality-related issues, especially if no school staff member is qualified to work in such projects. Therefore, it is recommended that the questionnaires do not allow identification, but only contain information concerning the grade level. Accordingly, it is recommended to conduct the analysis comparatively between grade levels (5th vs. 6th vs. 7th vs. 8th grades) and for the entire school. By adding up the scores awarded by students, one can obtain an average score (at school or grade level), or the percentage of students (out of the total students in the grade level or out of the total students in the school) that mention problems with regards to their relationship with the family (section A), or to the school environment (section B), or to their low aspirations for the future (section C, where the intention to leave the school after completing the lower secondary school can be observed). The method of analyzing the SASAT.ro data under EWM is included in the Annex I.

The results should be analyzed comparatively: (i) between one grade level and another; (ii) in time, between different rounds of SASAT.ro; and (iii) between schools. For example, the results for 5th grade students will be compared with those for 6th, 7th grade students, etc., as it can be found that certain types of preventive actions are not needed for the entire school, but only for 7th grade students, for example. Or it can be noticed that, while in the 5th grades the parental support is problematic, the main problem for 8th grade students is the low level of aspirations. Therefore, schools should conduct different preventive actions at each grade level. The school can establish the scores only after repeated measurements (See Annex I) so as to have a more accurate picture of what a “low level of family support” or a “poor learning environment in the classroom or the existence of peer victimization” mean, so as to determine the necessary preventive actions, as shown in *Box 3* below.

Box 3. Using the SASAT.ro Results under the EWM

If the following is found... (question)	Examples of ESL prevention actions:
Section A: "You and Your Family"	
A low level of parental support (A1 & A2)	For students: counseling; peer mentoring; social skills training; For parents: counseling, parenting education, School for parents (see example below), information sessions about the educational system and the available educational options.
A low level of expectations of parents related to student education (A4)	School staff should inspire parents through their own example, report regularly on the child's progress, expressing concern, communicating and fostering high educational expectations.
Section B: "At School"	
A low sense of belonging to school or low importance given to education (B1 & B2)	For students: various events that create a sense of belonging to a specific culture; a rich offering of various extracurricular activities, provided free of charge; career guidance and counseling; activities aimed at improving performance, reducing repetition, address learning difficulties.
A low level of support from teachers (B3)	For students: activities aimed at reducing absenteeism and improving performance, addressing learning difficulties.

If the following is found... (question)	Examples of ESL prevention actions:
	For school staff: training courses, especially in the field of student-centered teaching and of working with children at risk and with their families.
An inadequate learning environment in the classroom or violence among students (B5 & B6)	For students: activities aimed at improving student behavior. For the school staff: training courses on topics related to preventing and countering violence, especially violence in schools, as well as working with the child who is a victim of violence at home or at school. General: Existing disciplinary procedures should be known and accepted by all parties. They should be based on incentives, which highlight the appropriate and desirable behaviors, rather than sanctions and punishments that discourage students from learning and coming to school.
Section C: "Your future plans and aspirations"	
A low level of students' educational aspirations (intention of ESL) (C1)	For students: career guidance and counseling; meetings with people who have been successful in different careers and highlighting the contribution of education to this success.

The SASAT.ro questionnaires filled out by students should be kept and analyzed at school level. There is no need to enter the data in SIIR. The analysis may involve setting up an electronic database and automatic statistic processing or it may be performed manually, by counting the answers in the questionnaires, depending on the capacity of the school.

3.1.2 ESL Prevention Measures

Classroom activities aimed at reducing absenteeism

Teachers can establish a positive educational climate through reinforcing confident attitudes and stimulating student's interest in school attendance. Examples of relevant activities include:

- Use active learning techniques and a wide variety of participatory methods that stimulate the joy of learning and enhance students' motivation for learning.
- Enable close relationships with students based on trust and mutual respect and listen to their personal stories, concerns and issues that may trigger dropout.
- Use teaching methods that make references to real life situations to increase student involvement in learning activities (e.g. experiments, field visits, hands-on learning, etc.)
- Allow students to work in small groups to encourage discussions and critical thinking and develop their skills.
- Use assessment methods that do not induce fear of failure and give all students the opportunity to use their skills and present their achievements.
- Motivate students to improve their involvement and results, praising and rewarding them appropriately for any effort through a variety of rewards, ranging from compliments and words of encouragement, to assigning classroom responsibilities and organizer and coordinator roles (e.g. teacher's assistant).
- Involve students in attractive activities for developing socio-emotional skills and increasing self-esteem: trips, clubs and workshops, sporting and cultural events, watching movies, storytelling activities, etc.
- Monitor the relationships between students in the classroom and in the school and monitor the occurrence of bullying, which often causes school absenteeism.
- Develop collaborative relationships with the student's parents, to learn about family problems and identify the causes of absenteeism, e.g. the poor financial situation, family relationships, cases of abuse, negative influence models, parents abroad, overprotective or indifferent parenting styles, etc.
- Promote the values of intercultural education and inclusive practices that do not allow the marginalization or exclusion of certain students from the group.

Classroom activities aimed at improving performance and reducing repetition and dropout, as well as solving learning difficulties

Grade repetition is an important ESL trigger. Apart from the fact that grade repetition is discouraging, it is also associated with difficulties in improving student performance. Schools should, therefore, identify students with learning difficulties in order to provide them with timely support and ensure their inclusion in education by adapting learning environment to their needs. Learning difficulties are often manifested as students' weakness in reading, spelling, comprehension, as well as problematic behavior. Examples of activities aimed at addressing these situations include:

- Build close relationships with the students, based on mutual trust and respect, and show interest in their personal stories, concerns and problems of all kinds, which are often the main causes of poor school performance.
- Identify students' learning needs and support them to bridge learning gaps both during class hours and through remedial activities organized outside of the school program.
- Use teaching methods corresponding to real-life situations, contributing to the involvement of students in learning activities (e.g., experiments, field visits, meetings with resource persons and community guests, solving practical problems, etc.);
- Encourage peer evaluation and mentoring within the class.
- Promote project-based learning and group projects.
- Allow students to work in small groups, to encourage discussion and critical thinking and to develop their skills of cooperation and teamwork.
- Use assessment methods that do not induce fear of failure and give all students the opportunity to use their skills and present their achievements.
- Allow students to acquire the necessary skills at their own pace and support them to reach the highest level they are capable of (through additional classroom activities, setting additional tasks and giving individual attention, , the use of differentiated teaching and auxiliary material, by organizing remedial activities; if possible, establish a routine for engaging students in discussions and debates on relevant topics (for example, start the day/class with a short session of up to 10 minutes in that students present their ideas and talk about the topic chosen together with the teacher).
- Motivate students to improve their involvement and results, praising and rewarding them appropriately for any effort in a variety of ways ranging from compliments and words of encouragement to assigning classroom responsibilities and organizer or coordinator roles (e.g. the teacher's assistant).
- Involve the students in attractive activities for developing socio-emotional skills and increasing self-esteem: trips, clubs and workshops, sporting and cultural events, watching movies, storytelling activities, etc.
- Involve students in school-after-school activities that help them bridge the learning gaps and do their homework in different subjects.
- Communicate the results of the continuous evaluation, of the formative and summative assessments in a timely manner to the students and their parents. The end-of-semester evaluation must reflect the acquisition/development level of each of the competencies covered by the curriculum and the extra skills developed that reflect progress over a certain period and be accompanied by teachers' comments and remarks.

Classroom activities aimed at improving student behavior

Each school should define (in a participatory way, involving students and parents) what constitutes bad behavior on the basis of MONE regulations and the school's own internal policies and communicate these expectations to students and parents in writing at the beginning of the school year. Bad behavior is often manifested as aggression, bullying, disrespectful or disruptive attitude and disobedience. Schools should define behavioral expectations with the aim of supporting and improving the performance of the students' learning experience. Examples of activities aimed at improving student behavior include:

- Give positive reinforcement of appropriate behaviors through praise, encouragement, rewards, such as extra play time, roles of leader/organizer/teacher's assistant, etc.
- Change the furniture arrangement in the classroom according to the activities to create a friendly space that encourages communication or group work and fosters collaborative relationships between students.
- Involve the students in the formulation of class rules; such involvement will lead to a better observance of rules.
- Organize activities for knowledge sharing so that students know as much as possible about one another (for example, workshops).
- Introduce peer-mediation activities and programs to reduce violence in the school environment (for example, the friendship bench or setting up a place in the school yard dedicated to mediating small conflicts and reconciliation of all kinds between children).
- If appropriate, introduce mindfulness moments, in which students learn how to control their impulses through breathing and meditation exercises.
- Involve students in extracurricular activities that target the development of socio-emotional skills, such as sports, dance, theater, etc. or that address topics of interest, such as peaceful resolution of conflicts, anti-bullying, consequences of violence, etc.

School for parents

If, following the application of the SASAT.ro tool, a need for intervention aimed at parents is identified at the school level, such as when parental support to children is low or parents have low expectations regarding the education of the children, a School for Parents program should be launched.⁵⁰

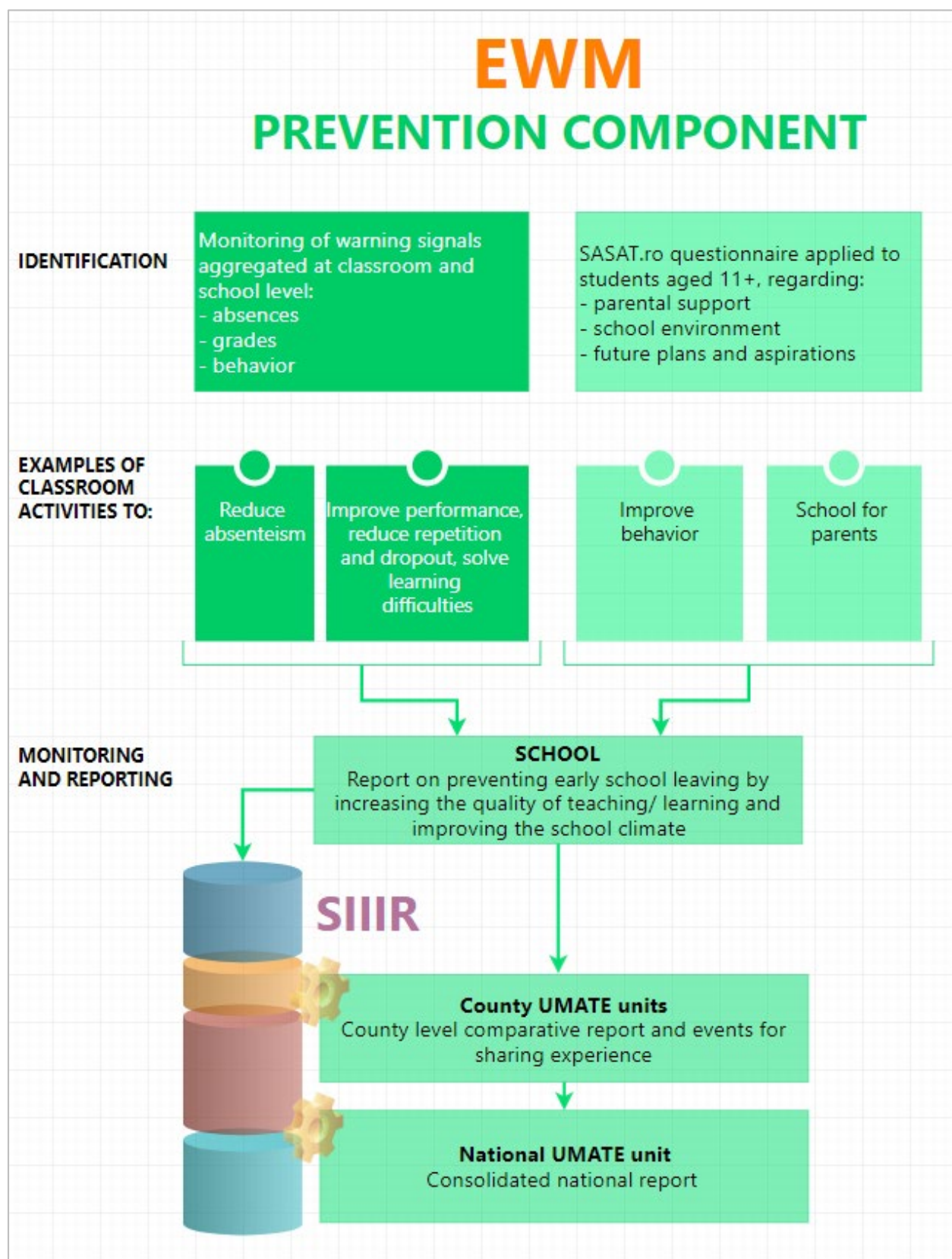
This program should be aimed, on the one hand, at strengthening parenting skills and on the other hand, at helping parents become more familiar with the education system. The activities proposed under the School for Parents should be focused on identified issues and address specific problems facing students in the specific school. The courses may include information on the role of parents, the challenges of caring for a child at different ages, various manners of resolving conflicts and solving problems related to the child's behavior, the characteristics of various ages and stages of development. The School for parents should expose parents to role models who have succeeded through education. It is very important to stimulate their interest in the students' activities in school, their progress but also in the educational paths their children are expected to follow.

Activities for parents should be run according to a fixed schedule, sessions lasting for up to two hours on a weekly basis, following a predefined model for each meeting - Introduction, Content Delivery, Closing. The topics to be discussed should be announced in advance and accompanied by supporting materials. The sessions in the School for Parents can be moderated by specialists in the field of psychology, pedagogy, educational psychology, and healthcare, but also by the social worker or other specialists from the community or by guests from outside the community. Civil society representatives can play a role within the School for Parents in terms of financial support, organization and provision of activities. The participation of parents in such courses is voluntary and the group has an open nature, as parents may come and go during sessions.

The EWM consultations have shown that, in general, parents with a low level of education need counseling. World Vision have observed during their projects that parental education courses are successful when groups are mixed, rather than made up exclusively of vulnerable parents. The additional benefit of a mixed group is the development of a support network. However, parents' motivation was low and World Vision introduced incentives, such as packages with clothes, hygiene products or food, for participants. The overview of the EWM prevention component, monitoring early warning signals, examples of classroom activities aiming at enhancing the quality of education and improving school climate, as well as monitoring and reporting tools are captured in *Infographic 4* below.

⁵⁰ Source: Adapted from Dnestrean, Rijicova and Grigoros (2016: 25-27).

Infographic 4. Overview of the EWM Prevention Component



3.2 EWM Intervention Component for Students at Risk of ESL

The EWM intervention component focuses on TG1 - Students at risk of dropping out and students in the process of dropping out. EWM focuses on the children and youth belonging to the dropout and ESL risk groups: (i) living in rural and small urban areas; (ii) living in marginalized areas and source communities at high risk of separation of children from their families; (iii) Roma; (iv) with special educational needs (SEN) or disabilities; (v) whose parents are abroad; and (vii) at risk of social exclusion due to poverty, lack of housing, single-parent family, extended family, illiterate parents, alcoholic parents, and other social risks.

The EWM intervention component is directed at children and youth enrolled in schools while differentiating between students at risk of dropping out (TG1) and students in the process of dropping out (recorded as enrolled but not attending classes). The School will prepare a list of students for the target group “Students in the process of dropping out” based on their status from SIIR, where it is recorded as “not complete” (“cu situatie neincheiata”) on the grounds of being “at risk of dropping out”, as opposed to having been expelled, having dropped out, having been hospitalized or being homeschooled. This list including the following details: (i) name, (ii) national identification number (CNP), and (iii) mother tongue (see Annex I), will be submitted to SPAS. It is important to separate these two target groups as the first step, because the subsequent EWM steps for the two groups are different: while students in the process of dropping out are covered by the EWM compensation component, the students attending the school are subject to an EWM observation procedure aimed at identifying at-risk students. The identification is guided by and recorded in the EWM Observation Sheet.

The EWM intervention component has four stages:

- => identifying separately students at risk of dropping out and students in the process of dropping out;
- => identifying and assessing risk factors and planning the intervention;
- => implementing interventions according to the level of severity of identified risks;
- => monitoring the progress at student level, individually and by level of severity of the risk.

All interventions proposed are of a positive nature, i.e. aimed at supporting, rather than penalizing, students and their families. The analysis of interventions implemented in other European countries shows that although fines or penalties for the family feature as actions of last resort in the majority of systems, in practice, they are rarely applied, as experience has shown that punitive approaches fail to solve the ESL problem and only exacerbate the stress the child is exposed to.⁵¹

The sections that follow discuss (a) activities to be carried out, (b) deadlines, (c) roles and responsibilities, and (d) data and information flow for each stage of the EWM intervention component.

⁵¹ In contrast with the European model, some American states, rely on penalties. In California, the parent that does not oblige the child to attend education may be liable to a 500 USD fine. If it is deemed that the parent has contributed to the truancy, the fine may increase to up to 2500 USD. More recently, more penalties have been added: for cases of “chronic truancy”, parents may be liable to a fine of up to 2000 USD and can even be sentenced to a year in prison. However, EWM follows the European model, which focuses on supporting the student and the family.

3.2.1 Identification of Students at Risk of Dropout

Current Regulations

According to current regulations pertaining to social protection (GD 691/2015, Art. 7), all at risk children (0–17 years old) should be identified by the national authorities using a dedicated instrument – the *Observation Sheet* that registers a risk situation without documenting it.⁵²

This regulation clearly indicates that the *Observation Sheet* should be filled in by a SPAS representative or a local professional who regularly comes into contact with the child, such as teacher, school mediator, family physician, nurse, health mediator, community nurse, neighborhood law enforcement institution, priest, or a specialists from an NGO accredited in the field of child protection.⁵³ However, in practice, this regulation is rarely implemented, as many institutional and political stakeholders of the central, county and local levels interviewed have confirmed. The main reason for low implementation is the low capacity and limited resources (especially staff) of SPAS to identify and assess all children at risk in a given territorial administrative unit (city, town, commune). For example, only in one out of the ten localities visited by the WB team during the consultation process, SPAS managed to identify children (about 600) with migrant parents between August and December 2018. Furthermore, the data collected by SPAS was recorded on paper, not in an electronic format, which makes it difficult to use and analyze.

Current education regulations and bylaws (National Education Law 1/2011, School Internal Regulation for Organization and Functioning) also obligate schools to regularly monitor student attendance, academic achievement and behavior, and inform parents in case of low student attendance or lack of participation, poor performance and misconduct.

The proposed EWM takes into consideration the existing legislation in education and social sectors and builds on it aiming to ensure coordination between SPAS and schools at the local level under an integrated approach to ESL and school dropout.

Identification under the proposed EWM. Under the proposed EWM, the school identifies separately students at risk of dropping out and students in the process of dropping out at the classroom level using the *EWM Observation Sheet* (template provided in Annex I) adapted to the specificities of the proposed EWM. The *EWM Observation Sheet* contains five risk indicators related to the ESL warning signals: low attendance, poor academic performance, grade repetition and poor behavior (*Table 4*). Class masters are responsible for filling in the *EWM Observation Sheet* for each student in his/her classroom within one week after the end of the first school month. Schools should also undertake ongoing identification for cases emerging during the school year.

Table 4. Risk Indicators in the EWM Observation Sheet for Identifying TG1

1. The student has low school attendance	Yes	No
2. The student has poor academic performance	Yes	No
3. The student has repeated the year once	Yes	No
4. The student has repeated the year two or more times	Yes	No
5. The student has a history of school sanctions (expulsion, reprimand, transfer on disciplinary grounds, low conduct marks, etc.) or complaints from their peers and/or parents and/or teachers related to violence, bullying, theft, destruction of property, etc.	Yes	No

Prior to filling in the *EWM Observation Sheet*, it is recommended that school organizes one to two meetings with teachers, school counselor, school mediator and other specialists working with the respective school, to share information, observations and recommendations on truancy, student academic performance and

⁵² According to this regulation, the risk situations relate to family socio-economic status, family health status, family education level, family housing conditions, and at-risk behaviors identified in the family.

⁵³ GD 691/2015 (Art. 6).

behavior. Then, the class masters responsible for filling in *EWM Observation Sheets* will discuss and analyze the respective situations together with the school principal at the Class Council meeting. Going further, the school is obliged to inform the Student Council and the Parent Association /Parent Representatives' Committee about the content of the *EWM Observation Sheet* and the process of identifying at-risk students to ensure transparency and cooperation.

Roles and responsibilities, deadlines, timeline and information flow related to identification. The school is responsible for filling in individual *EWM Observation Sheets* and aggregating the data at the school level, while ensuring transparency and cooperation with beneficiaries and all relevant stakeholders. Within half week after submission of individual observation sheets, the school staff responsible for SIIR operations enter the data into the *School Observatory* (template provided in Annex I). The School Observatory shall be updated regularly to reflect cases occurring during the school year.

Identification Activities	Who's Responsible	Deadline/Timeline	Partners
Identify students at risk of dropping out	School: teachers and class masters	1 week after the end of the first school month	School counselor, support teacher, school mediator, students, parents
Enter the data into the School Observatory	School: staff responsible for SIIR	0.5 week after collection of Observation Sheets	Teachers and class masters

The data found in the Observation Sheets will be analyzed and recorded as follows:

- If all five indicators in the *EWM Observation Sheet* are marked with "No" = The student has no risk of school dropout or ESL;
- If at least one of the five indicators in the *EWM Observation Sheet* is marked with "Yes" = There is a warning signal of dropout or ESL.

It should be noted that through the *School Observatory* tool these data on risk indicators for each student will be entered into SIIR, which will allow for analyses at the school, county and national level.

3.2.2 Intervention Measures to Address ESL

Current regulations. Once children are identified as being at risk, existing regulation (GD 691/2015) indicates that SPAS is obliged to evaluate these children through home visits, following which SPAS representatives confirm or decline the risk assessments. As with the Observation Sheet, SPAS' compliance with this regulation is low, as has been reported during the consultation process with key institutional and political stakeholders.

Evaluation activities under the proposed EWM. In an effort to ensure compliance, the proposed EWM, places the responsibility for carrying out the evaluation activities on the school. In one week, the class masters fill in the *EWM Assessment Sheet* (template provided in Annex I) for each student in his/her classroom identified as at risk in the School Observatory. Then, within one week, the school staff responsible for SIIR operations consolidate the data from EWM Assessment Sheets into the *Register of Students at ESL Risk* (template provided in Annex I).

The EWM Assessment Sheet is aligned with the tools developed in previous studies and initiatives.⁵⁴ While the *EWM Observation Sheet* collects ESL related warning signs for individual students, the *EWM Assessment Sheet* allows school staff, students and parents to better understand the causes and risks of dropout/ESL and plan the most appropriate interventions to meet students' needs.

⁵⁴ For individual student parameters, see UNICEF (2012) and Van Cappelle & Bell (2016).

Planning

Current regulations. According to current regulations (GD 691/2015), once the evaluation is completed, SPAS should prepare, implement and monitor a services plan that should include interventions to respond to the identified needs of the child and family: types of services and benefits to be provided, objectives, services provider and implementation timeline.⁵⁵ Also, for each family with children in at least one risk situation, SPAS is obliged to designate a prevention case manager. SPAS is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the services plan through home visits. The frequency of monitoring visits depends on the number of risk factors children in the family are exposed to. Thus, for families with 1 to 5 risks included in the Toolkit (Annex I), monitoring visits should be conducted annually or as required. For families with 6 to 10 risk factors, the visits should be conducted semi-annually, and, for those with more than 10 risk factors, the visits should be conducted quarterly or as required.

Due to SPAS' limited capacity to develop and implement services plans, at present, education services plans are limited to children placed under the special protection system (children separated from their families). In practice, these services are developed by Directorate General for Social Assistance and Child Protection (DGASPC) specialists, not by SPAS. Therefore, the proposed EWM charges the schools with developing and implementing education services plans.

At this stage, the school has identified and assessed students at risk of dropping out and can proceed with developing and implementing the education services plan(s) for the students registered in the *School Observatory* and the *Register of Students at ESL Risk*.

The school appoints a prevention case manager for each student at ESL risk who can be the class master, another teacher, school counselor or psychologist, where available. Once appointed, the prevention case manager develops the *Educational Services Plan* (template provided in Annex I) for each student at risk.

In line with the legal provisions, Education Services Plan will include: the types of services and benefits to be provided, services providers, and the timeline. The Education Services Plan should correspond to the causes and risk factors established during the evaluation process. A good example of an intervention is the intensive educational support package, developed and piloted under the Roma Children and Parents Want to Go to School project of the Roma Education Fund (provided in Annex II). The support package was a combination of remedial measures (tutoring), snacks, career counseling and guidance, individual or group mentoring, activities for students and parents, and scholarships.

The Educational Services Plan(s) will be approved by the school principal and be included into the *Register of Students at ESL Risk*.

Roles and responsibilities, deadlines, timeline and data flow. The school develops the Education Services Plan(s) within two weeks and then, agrees with each student and their parents on the respective education services plan.

⁵⁵ GD 691/2015, Art. 11.

Box 4. Education Services Plan Should Promote an Inclusive School Environment

Inclusive education for all children. *"Inclusive education involves a permanent process of improving the school institution, with the purpose of using the existing resources, especially human resources, to support the participation of all students in a community in the education process."⁵⁶ If certain children have special needs or requirements, they can be addressed in regular inclusive learning environments.*

In order to promote inclusive education, schools should identify needs early, develop support services and create an accessible environment adapted to the specific needs of students with developmental problems and/or learning difficulties. Support services should become available in all mainstream schools, with the support of specialist teams such as speech therapists, psychologists, and educational psychologists etc., trained with the help of County Center for Educational Resources and Assistance (CJRAE).

Issues cannot be solved only through punishment

Deviations from school norms are regarded in literature as clear signs of the student's distancing oneself from the school. The more numerous and intense the deviations, the higher the risk of the student dropping out of school or leaving education early. Therefore, sanctions should be designed to mitigate the risk and not to contribute to increasing the distance between the student and the school. As a rule, disciplinary reprimands, lowering the conduct grade, transferring to another class and other types of measures should be accompanied by counseling and, possibly, by sessions with a school psychologist for adolescents with non-compliant behaviors, which will require a change in the existing school culture. In the majority of schools, "the Rules and Procedures cover problem behaviors such as verbal and physical violence against peers and teachers, destruction of school assets... The Rules and Procedure are communicated to parents and students at the beginning of the school year. The parents sign the education contract in the 5th grade, after which the parent signature of acknowledgement is required annually. If the rules are not observed, the standard procedure applies: verbal reprimand in front of the classroom, verbal reprimand in front of the Teaching Staff Committee, written reprimand sent to parents. Generally, these measures have no effect, there is no coercive measure" (Interview with a school principal). Concerns of the staff are focused on the lack of severe penalties and on the impossibility of expelling the student during the period of compulsory education. However, none of the schools visited and no specialist interviewed mentioned the existence or need for counseling sessions or sessions with the school psychologist for troubled adolescent students or for their families.

Implementation

Once Education Services Plan(s) are developed, the school shall obtain students and their parents' approval and acceptance of the proposed education services, through the following consensus building procedure:

- The class master or case manager sends a letter to the parents requesting a meeting. In case the parents are illiterate, the class master or case manager organizes a meeting with the parents, student and, depending on the case, the school principal and representatives of the Class Council. This is a common practice in many schools, which will enable a smooth implementation of the proposed EWM. Upon the discretion of the principal, a school mediator, counselor or another specialist from CJRAE or an NGO (psychologist, speech therapist, support teacher, etc.) may also be invited to this meeting;
- During the meeting, the Education Services Plan is discussed and agreed with students and parents. The discussion addresses the indicators (*Table 4*) based on which the student was identified as being at risk. The parents and the student are reminded of the face-to-face meeting on which the evaluation was based. Then, the measures and types of support proposed by the specialists and entered into the Education Services Plan are discussed. The parents and the student can express their opinions, reject certain types of measures or propose other types of intervention. Only after the specialists, the parents and the student reach a consensus, the Educational Services Plan is considered final; it should be signed by the case manager and the parent(s) or caregiver of the student;
- In case the parents refuse to attend the meeting, the school principal may request additional support from the local authority, as deemed appropriate;
- The Education Services Plan is accompanied by the *Commitment to Remediation* (template provided in Annex I) that contains clear responsibilities for each party (student, parents, class master/case manager,

⁵⁶ MEN and UNICEF (1999) and GD no. 1251/2005 on measures to improve learning, teaching, compensation, recovery and special protection of children/youth with SEN.

school counselor and other specialists) and is signed by the case manager and the parent(s) or caregiver as well. At the same time, the case manager signs a *Confidentiality Agreement* (template provided in Annex I), as they manage a large amount of sensitive information about the child and their family.

Intervention measures are differentiated into **levels 2, 3 and 4** depending on the severity of the situation, as follows:

- **Level 2** measures address students at ESL risk with low school attendance **or** learning difficulties;
- **Level 3** measures address students displaying **several warning signs at the same time**, such as high absenteeism combined with low academic achievement.
- **Level 4** measures address students **accumulating several risk factors**: absences, poor academic achievement, inadequate behavior caused by abuse, neglect, violence, child exploitation, possibly, associated with severe poverty, lack of or poor housing conditions, health issues, disability, SEN, etc.

While level 2 and 3 measures require collaboration of the school staff with other specialists working in the education system, such as counselor, school psychologist, CJRAE specialists, Level 4 measures may only be implemented by a multidisciplinary team comprising social worker, doctor, law enforcement officer, as well as other specialists from outside the education system.

Level 2 measures

At this level, the school provides education services to students with identified ESL risk according to the plan agreed with the student and parents. The school provides level 2 measures over a six-month period from December to June (by the end of the school year). The class master/case manager is responsible for monitoring the delivery of the education services every three months and recording the progress in the *EWM Progress Report* (template provided in Annex I) for every student at risk. Level 2 measures may include counselling services, remedial lessons, more interactions with family and students, participation in community cultural events, etc. At the same time, the school continues to provide level 1 measures to enhance education quality and school climate, which are described under the prevention component.

Review the Education Services Plan. After three months of services delivery, the class master/case manager reviews, within a two-week period, the education services plan for each at-risk student and decides whether to maintain level 2 measures or move to level 3 measures. The school principal may also invite school mediator/counselor or other specialists (e.g. psychologist, speech therapist, support teacher, etc.) to support the school with the review process.

In case it is decided is to move to level 3 measures, the class master/case manager prepares the *Revised Education Services Plan* (template provided in Annex I) to reflect the specific circumstances of the student.

Level 3 measures

At this level, the class master/case manager sends a letter to the parents, requesting a meeting to discuss and agree on the *Revised Education Services* plan. To this meeting the school principal may also invite other specialists and community representatives who may agree with providing some of the services included in the revised education services plan.

Once the revised education services plan is agreed and signed by students and their parents, the school starts implementing level 3 measures. The class master/case manager updates the *EWM Progress Report* to reflect the revised services and measures.

Under level 3 measures, the revised services plan should include mandatory parental counseling and/or education, and psychological therapy, alongside other agreed activities. The class master/case manager is in charge of implementing the measures over six months from December to June (by the end of the school year) and may engage community resources (mediator, social worker, volunteers, NGO resources). At the same time, the school continues providing level 1 measures to enhance education quality and school climate, as well as maintain level 2 measures based on class master/case manager's decision.

In case level 3 measures fail, the class master/case manager refers the case to SPAS or DGASPC within two weeks after the evaluation of the initial three-month delivery period. The case is referred to SPAS or DGASPC even in the case of children placed in the special protection system, but also in situations of abuse, violence,

exploitation, child labor. Then, the school appoints a specialist (case manager, class master, school counselor or a teacher) to be part of a team providing integrated community services coordinated by SPAS.

Level 4 measures

At this level, SPAS is responsible for the delivery of the measures by an integrated community intervention team comprising specialists in social assistance (SPAS), health, education (school) and community mediator/facilitator. It is recommended that this team applies the case management method, working directly with the entire family, on the basis of a clear program, agreed with family members through an integrated intervention model (template provided in Annex I) comprising intensive support and the provision of services and benefits.⁵⁷ At the same time, the school should enable a peer support system in the school, as well as provide counseling, therapy and any other appropriate measures from levels 1, 2 and 3. All these measures will be implemented over six months from December to June. The table below presents the level 2, 3 and 4 measures, activities, roles and responsibilities with the implementation timeline that is presented in more detail in the EWM Action Plan (Section 6).

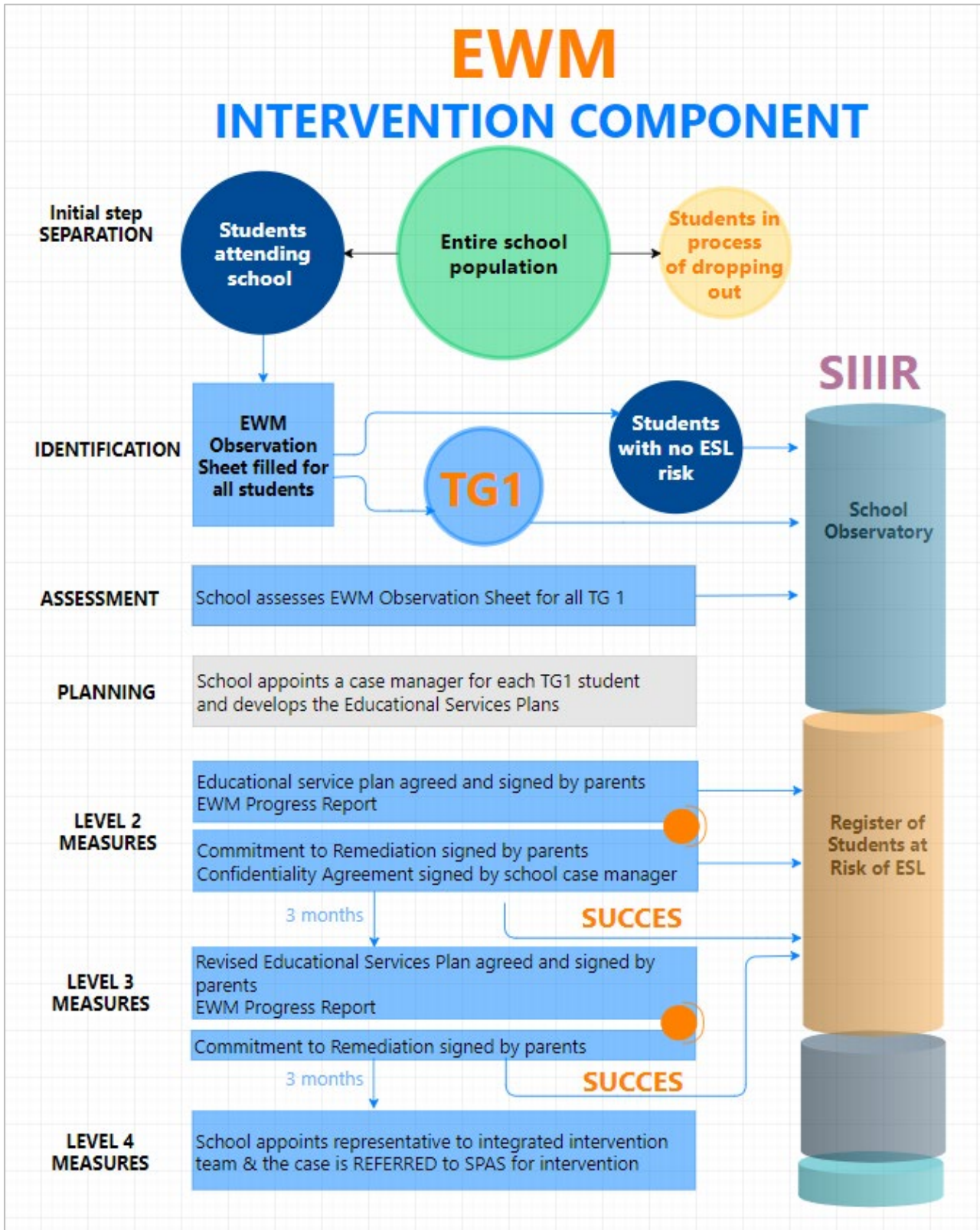
Table 5. Intervention Roles and Responsibilities, Timeline and Information Flow

Intervention Component	Activity	Responsible	Timeline
Level 2 measures	Provide education services according to the plan and monitor their delivery every three months; provide level 1 measures, plus counseling, remedial lessons, etc.	Class master/case manager	Over six months from December to June
	Review the education services plan to maintain level 2 measures or move to level 3.	Class master/case manager	Two weeks after three months delivery of education services
Level 3 measures	Provide education services according to the revised plan, e.g. parental counseling and/or education, psychological therapy, engage community resources (mediator, social worker, volunteers, NGOs); Continue providing level 1 and 2 measures.	Class master/case manager	Over six months from December to June
	Refer the case to SPAS or DGASPC in case level 3 measures fail and appoint a specialist to be part of an integrated community intervention team.	School principal and Class master/case manager	Two weeks after the failure of level 3 measures is established
Level 4 measures	Provide measures through an integrated community intervention team.	SPAS	Over six months from December to June
	Report potential risks situations: abuse, violence and exploitation, child labor; Continue to provide peer support system in school, counselling, and therapy and appropriate measures from levels 1, 2, and 3.	School principal, teaching staff	

The EWM intervention component is organized as illustrated by the *Infographic 5* below, presenting all intervention stages by level of severity, target groups, involved institutions and tools to be used.

⁵⁷ The integrated intervention model was developed by the World Bank in 2016.

Infographic 5. Overview of the EWM Intervention Component



3.3 EWM Compensation Component for (Re)Integrating Out-of-School Children and Youth

The compensation efforts are an integral part of and a priority for the proposed EWM due to the increasing number of children and youth outside the education and training (ET) system, whether they have never been enrolled in a school or have dropped out of it. Many of the education specialists interviewed, however, highlighted prevention measures giving students a “first chance,” rather than a second change, as the highest priority for ESL interventions. Prevention is indeed the most efficient and effective way for a healthy education system. However, Romanian education system cannot be characterized as healthy due to the alarmingly high number of youths in need of urgent targeted integrated compensatory interventions. There are currently 107,000 out-of-school children aged 10 to 14 who have been failed by the education system and society at large. The EWM compensation component aims to prepare the education system for reintegrating around 100,000 out-of-school children, which equals to 13 percent of the current lower secondary student population of this age.

Table 6. Lower Secondary Students and Out-of-School Children at the Beginning of School Year 2018/19

Category	Students enrolled in lower secondary education	Out-of-school students aged 11 to 14
Total	737,423	107,000

To address this issue of high numbers of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), other ministries joined efforts with MONE through a number of EU financed projects during the current programming period of 2014—2020. These interventions can be divided into two categories: i) providing community integrated services and ii) bringing NEETs back to school. The EWM compensation component aims to complement the other interventions and bring back to school the 100,000 school-age children and youth who are good candidates for the Second Chance or mainstream programs.

Successful international experience shows that compensation impact is achieved by targeting not only children and youth already outside the education and training system, but also groups at risk of dropout. On the basis of the trends of the past five years, the number of students currently enrolled in lower secondary education and at a high risk of dropping out by grade eight is estimated at 120,000. Therefore, the total population of young people targeted by compensation measures in the proposed EWM is about 227,000.

The questions that had to be addressed in drawing up the EWM compensation component were: Who are the children and youth outside the education and training (ET) system? How many are they? What is their geographic distribution? How can they be (re)integrated? How can they be identified? to How to coordinate and target the efforts towards these groups? The coordination among stakeholders was of a special concern due to a large number of EU funded projects aimed at preventing ESL.

The compensation component of the EWM will focus on the identification of and data collection on the children and youth outside the education and training system using a demand driven approach. The future relative weight of EWM components will be determined by the dynamics of ESL indicators. Once the current ESL trend reverses, the focus of interventions will gradually shift from compensation to prevention. Currently in Romania, the compensation component may be the most difficult to implement as it spans more than three sectors – education, social, law and order, and labor – with accountability similarly fragmented. The collaboration between social assistance services, schools, medical service, and law enforcement services is key, but activities related to the children and youth outside the ET system are difficult to implement without engaging the community. In some cases, other local institutions or specialists are required, such as formal or informal community groups or leaders, vocational schools and high schools, or institutions at the county level (CSI, CJRAE, DGASPC, AJOFM). This complex and at the same time flexible

set up is rarely present at the local level. Teams providing integrated services are scarce and Romania still lacks social service specialists at the local level. Methodologies for collaboration and coordination are lacking, and involving sectors or institutions at different levels is still under-regulated, and not fully implemented (as in the case of GD 691/2015). Therefore, although the EWM proposes a simplified methodology (presented below), its implementation may have a limited coverage, depending on the institutional capacity to coordinate and collaborate at all levels.

3.3.1 Identifying Out-of-School Children and Youth

Under the EWM methodology, out-of-school (or out-of-ET) children and youth comprise the following five groups (see also Section 3.5 and *Infographic 1*):⁵⁸

- 1) TG2 – School-age children (6-17 years old) never enrolled in school
- 2) TG3 – School-age children (6-17 years old) who dropped out – early school leavers
- 3) Migrant children – who are coming back to Romania and need reenrollment
- 4) TG4 – Youth aged 18-24 years who have completed at most 8 grades and who are not enrolled in further education or training
- 5) Students in the process of dropping out

All children aged 3 to 17 in Romania have the right to education that is realized through institutions of education, training and child protection. In other words, the responsibility of the education system does not stop when a child leaves school early or is not enrolled, but extends to children outside the school. Similarly, the SPAS interest should not be limited to preparing files for the subsidies or benefits allocation, but should also cover the children's right to education. Therefore, SPAS should actively participate in the effort to bring children and youth to school and, in its turn, the school should actively participate in preventing the separation of the child from the family, as it is a known ESL risk factor. In the absence of a regulation that covers the allocation of roles and ways of harmonizing institutional efforts and coordinating institutional partnership in the area of education, the issue of out-of-school children remains unresolved.

Fragmentation of institutional roles in education and child protection system has resulted in gaps in the provision of children's rights guaranteed by the law. This has given rise to two phenomena requiring immediate action: i) "**invisible**" children who "[disappear] from the attention of families, communities, societies and governments, donors, civil society, media,"⁵⁹ and ii) **children without identification papers** who grow up in marginalized areas, in miserable conditions, exposed to a range of risks, with single mothers (sometimes victims of domestic violence) without home or stable residency.⁶⁰ The rights of children falling in these two categories are neglected. Although in some communities, such situations are well-known, they are not reported or addressed, such as the situations report by children who had contacted the Children's Helpline (*Box 5*). It has to be concluded that the current regulations are insufficient and rarely implemented, and supporting procedures are missing.

In order to address this situation, the following mandatory procedures should be urgently prepared and implemented:

- school census, correlated with the GD 691/2015 provisions on the children census at community level;
- identification and integration of children never enrolled in school;
- identification and reintegration of children who had dropped out;

⁵⁸ As shown in sections 1.2 and 2.1, it is expected that children and youth with a disproportionately high risk of dropping out or ESL are those: (i) living in rural and small urban areas; (ii) from marginalized areas and source communities, with a high risk of separation of children from their families; (iii) of Roma ethnicity; (iv) with special educational needs (SEN) or disabilities; (v) whose parents are abroad; and (vii) at risk of social exclusion related to poverty, lack of housing, single-parent families, families with multiple children, illiterate parents, alcoholic parents, etc.

⁵⁹ UNICEF (2006). Other UNICEF reports: Stănculescu & Marin (2012) or Stănculescu (ed.) (2013).

⁶⁰ World Bank (2018) *Output #6*. Census of families with children in 30 source communities in rural areas.

- data collection on children living abroad and updating their schooling status;
- reintegration of children who return after spending more than one year abroad.
- identification and reintegration of young NEETs aged 18 to 24, especially in the context of expected impact of the Youth Guarantee program.

According to the law enacted four years ago (GD 691/2015) SPAS should have undertaken a children's census.⁶¹ Had this project been completed, all 3-to-17-year-old children who are outside of ET would have been: i) identified; ii) assessed based on the risk exposure status; iii) recorded in the Register of At-Risk Children in the Community, iv) provided with a services plan developed by SPAS, and v) targeted by implemented interventions. Sadly, the law has not yet been implemented throughout the country.

It is currently recommended that schools carry out the census of the children living in their catchment area in collaboration with the local public administration authorities before the beginning of the school year. As the census is not enforced as a mandatory procedure, it is done only by schools with insufficient cohorts or by the schools that are proactive in their communities. Some schools use the children data from other institutions as an alternative to conducting a census. Even when the school census is conducted, "kindergarten and primary teachers, class masters go from door to door without standard procedures, as an informal activity, writing down the data in their own note-books" or just listing the names.⁶² Only a few schools conduct the census annually and have developed standard forms for this purpose.

According to MONE, the role of these censuses is to help the local committees check that children registered are enrolled.⁶³ The regulation stipulates that when children of school age are not enrolled in the school "county committees, schools, local authorities with the support of NGOs, take the legal steps to ensure the children's right to education". Currently, only the children of the school starting age are included in the school census. During interviews teachers reported that "years ago, School Inspectorates were sending teachers to carry out census of children who had to be in school". Nowadays, in urban areas teachers report that they are not aware of such procedures, or of the number of children outside the system. Teachers in rural schools know even where the out-of-school children live in the community, but they are not screened by SPAS or by schools as "there is no formal request or procedure for such children". This also explains the challenges met by the DGASPC when enrolling children from the special protection system for the first time. There are reports of frequent refusals by the schools to enroll children from the special protection system.⁶⁴

Given the failings and shortcomings of the national children's census, the EWM includes a Quick Census for identifying out-of-school children and youth. It is designed as a community effort and is based on a clear methodology aligned with the methodology used by schools for identifying students at risk of dropout or ESL. Therefore, any locality in Romania has the capacity to conduct this Quick Census with the existing resources in the community, provided, of course, there is political will. Even where a complete census is not possible, collecting the data in the marginalized areas, Roma communities and poor neighborhoods with produce satisfactory results. Potential limitations of the EWM Quick Census are related to: (i) quality of data collected; (ii) periodic updating of data; (iii) data sharing between institutions, compliant with data protection rules; (iv) data use for clear and binding procedures for each target group. Additional resources are needed at central level for expanding SIIR.

⁶¹ Art. 13. (1), GD 691/2015.

⁶² The most frequently mentioned is the census of 0-to-3-year-old children carried out annually by kindergarten teachers to enroll them in preschool.

⁶³ See MONE's methodology for enrollment in primary education in school year 2018-2019, Chapter IX, Art. 32, para. (1) and (2).

⁶⁴ During consultations, the DGASPC in one county requested the School Inspectorate to verify a complaint about a school refusing to enroll three institutionalized children.

Out-of-school children and youth identification activities. The proposed EWM uses a simplified methodology for identifying out-of-school children and youth, outlined below, aiming to increase the effectiveness of implementation. The first activity to carry out is a Quick Census, coordinated jointly by the mayor and the school principal, mobilizing SPAS, other town hall resources, teaching staff and any volunteer available in the community. The census will be carried out from door to door, providing a complete scan of children and youth population. The tool used for the **Quick Census** is the *EWM Identification Sheet for Out-of-School Children and Youth* (for TG2, TG3, TG4 & Migrant children groups). See Annex I for the template corresponding to the GD 691/2015 requirements and following the checklist from the Observation Sheet.

The data are aggregated by SPAS that is charged with their input in the **Register for Reenrollment in ET** (an electronic spreadsheet), using the template provided. SPAS sends the file to school to enroll the out-of-school children (Sections A, B and D of the Register), migrant children (Section C), and 18-to-24-year-old youngsters from TG4 (Section E). The data in Section E concerning TG4 should be shared by SPAS with the County Agency for Employment (AJOFM), schools including vocational, NGOs and training providers that can reintegrate children and youth. The data sharing requires compliance with the General Data Protection Rules (GDPR) established at the EU level and other international rules related to data confidentiality.

Key issues to be considered:

- The EWM Quick Census is feasible in rural areas, but it may be difficult in urban areas, in cities with more than 20,000 inhabitants. Unlike the rural areas, the Quick Census should be organized by school catchment areas. However, considering previous experiences, the recommendation is to focus on marginalized areas, Roma communities and poor neighborhoods. Generally, they are located downtown or at the outskirts of the city, in historical areas (where buildings were nationalized), in decommissioned industrial areas, in communities living near garbage dumps, in the former assisted-living facilities and housing projects.⁶⁵
- The application of the EWM quick census needs appropriate time allocation. During consultations, a pilot Quick Census survey was conducted in a commune with 2,600 inhabitants in order to evaluate the time needed by a social worker conducting the survey.⁶⁶ The social worker needed one week to get acquainted with the EWM documentation and prepare reports on 49 youngsters considered early school leavers aged 18 to 24: 2 had never attended school; 38 had completed 8 grades (the others had completed between 2 and 7 grades), and only 20 were still living in the locality. Of the 29 not residing in the locality one was in prison, 10 got married and moved to another locality, and 18 were working abroad.
- The EWM quick census in Section E does not record the entire TG4 group (all potential early school leavers aged 18 to 24 years). It records only local young NEETs living in the locality and having no job, not in apprenticeship or internship to be involved in the compensation program.

Box 5. Out-of-school children's experiences

"... I would like to know if I can go back to school. When I was in 2nd grade, I went to Spain with my parents. Although I stayed there for four years, I didn't go to school. Now we are back in Romania and I would like to go to school." (12-year-old girl)

"... I am 11 years old and I would like to tell you my story. I went to school for two years, but then they would not have me, because I did not have a birth certificate. Neither does my mother. I would like to go to school, do you think I'll be able to go back?" (11-year-old boy)

"... Two years ago, my mother went to Italy, because she got a job there. I stayed here, with my dad. We moved to another locality, but my father did not enroll me in school. He told me that this was my mother's responsibility. I want to go to school" (13-year-old girl)

Source: Children's Helpline
(www.telefonulcopilului.ro)

⁶⁵ Swinkels et al. (ed.) (2014).

⁶⁶ With many thanks to Ms. Teodora Gavrilă, social worker in Vlad Tepes Town Hall.

- The first phase of the EWM Quick Census will determine a baseline to decide on the next steps. Discovering only isolated cases in each locality will require just-in-time local solutions, however, identifying hundreds of cases per locality will necessitate the preparation of a national-scale mechanism and methodology for (re)integrating these children and youth as a matter of national priority.
- The main challenge in maintaining the Reintegration Register is keeping the data up to date, especially in the big urban areas. New student cohorts enter and exit each school year, other children leave the system or come back from abroad or move with their parents. Procedures to track school leavers in employment or further studies will be useful for checking against dropouts. However, the Reintegration Register focus is on early identification of children, who do not exceed the grade level age by more than three years allowing them to be reintegrated into full-time regular education.

Roles, data and information flow for out-of-school children and youth. The EWM Quick Census for identifying out-of-school children and youth is a community exercise coordinated by representatives of local authorities and schools. Staff from SPAS and schools inform relevant local stakeholders of the children’s status and mobilize their support.

Table 7. Target Groups of the Compensation Component

		Responsible Body	Partners
TG2	School-age (6 to 17 years old) children never enrolled in school	SPAS and the School, under the coordination of the mayor and the school principal.	Other town hall resources, and community volunteers.
TG3	School-age (6 to 17 years old) children who dropped out – early school leavers Migrant children		
TG4	Early school leavers aged 18 to 24 years (NEET)		

SPAS assembles the data and compiles and maintains the *Register for Reenrollment in ET*. The data collection tools are user friendly, but data quality depends on the reliability of data respondents. At the community level it is important to visit Roma communities with numerous children, otherwise the screening will give only a partial image.

The data on migrant children will provide the first estimates, which would require rigorous error checking. To this end, MONE will need to develop a reporting mechanism accepted by its counterpart ministries in other European countries and supplemented by the introduction of a new mandatory registration system for migrants. Without some such instruments the quality of the data on migrant children will not be improved. However, despite all the limitations above, the Reintegration Register will provide an overview of the population in need of reintegration into the education system that can have a tangible impact at the school, community and national levels.

After filling in all the data and information in the Register, SPAS and schools will facilitate reenrollment. The data on TG4 – NEETs aged 18 to 24 will be disseminated among employment agencies, vocational schools, training providers, the Youth Guarantee program, NGOs and any other stakeholders that may provide compensation measures for out-of-school children and youth. At the school level, the staff responsible for SIIR will manage the Register as well. Once the School enters the data, it becomes available for the county and national Units of Management and Technical Assistance in Education (UMATE). At the central level, the School Observatory contains a data section that can be covered with new variables in SIIR.

3.3.2 Compensation Measures for Out-of-School Children and Youth

Assessment and planning of individual compensation measures. For this purpose, the community intervention team can use the tools developed for at-risk students, respectively the EWM Evaluation Sheet and the Educational Services Plan. The methodology for interinstitutional work and coordination needs to be developed in cooperation between MMJS, MONE and, possibly, Ministry of Health the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Department for the Relations with Romanians Abroad of the Presidential Administration, as well as international donors or NGOs that have developed and piloted different models of integrated services in communities.⁶⁷ As neither of these institutions have the leverage to secure a common agreement unilaterally, the Interinstitutional Coordination Committee for Reducing Early School Leaving can make the interinstitutional decisions.

Successful examples of reducing ESL have developed remedial *alternative schools*, rather than *alternatives to school*. The *alternative school* model promotes inclusivity and diversity through an integrated approach, providing personalized teaching and training, as well as programs addressed to families and households.⁶⁸ In the Netherlands, the *Let's Get Started* program (presented in more detail in Annex II) provides coaching activities to youth aged 15 to 23 to enhance their opportunities to continue education and enter the labor market. The program is structured in four steps: (1) Comprehensive assessment of the risk factors based on which personal and professional objectives are agreed upon; (2) Internship or education program focusing on reintegration into mainstream education; (3) Skills development/improvement; and (4) A monitoring period when coaching sessions are limited and students act independently.

The Second Chance Program (SC) is one of the best-known compensation measures targeting people who didn't complete lower secondary education and who are more than four years older than the corresponding grade-level age. Although popular and relevant, the SC program is implemented in fewer schools than needed. For example, the qualitative research conducted by MONE in 2018 to monitor the Strategy to Prevent Early School Leaving in Romania showed that, out of the 93 selected schools, only 24 had benefited from a SC program, and only 7 schools were still implementing the program at the time of the research. The reasons for closing the program include the following: end of funding (for EU projects), poor attendance by some beneficiaries, low number of trainees to carry out the program locally.

The Second Chance program in Romania started under the Phare Programme financed by the EU in 2004, to benefit disadvantaged groups of the population. The SC route into education is for adolescents, youth and adults coming from various backgrounds and of different ages who have not followed primary or lower secondary education and have not obtained the basic level of qualifications. As described in the methodology approved through Ministerial Order 5248/2011, updated in 2017, there are important strengths of the program that are worth mentioning:

- Flexibility in schedule allows students to maintaining their professional or family relationships (day and evening classes, intensive classes); also there are two entry points into the program, in October and February, and for EU funded SC programs, students can be enrolled in the program at any time of the school year, depending on the legal agreement and with the approval of the County School Inspectorate.
- Recognition of prior learning acquired through formal, non-formal or informal settings;
- Innovation through provision of modular learning, use of the credit system and personalized learning process.
- Permeability in career route, in the lower secondary education program, learning is provided over the standard four years but includes grades 5-8, as well as grades 9 and 10 (with the curriculum extracted from the technological route). Graduates can continue their studies in high school or take the vocational route.
- Provision of certification for level 2 competencies.

⁶⁷ For example, the Social Program: Opportunity and Responsibility – SPOR (Tesliuc et al., ed., 2016) and the model developed by UNICEF in Bacau county.

⁶⁸ Dale (2010).

The program is still successful due to the increased demand from young people outside the school and early school leavers, and benefits from infusion of EU funds. In the past five years, the number of students almost **doubled (from 8,000 students in 2013, to 14,691 in 2018)**, as evidenced by SIIIR data. This data shows that the SC program has a much better coverage in urban areas - 60 percent of schools providing the program are located in urban areas and accommodate 70 percent of students. The data also shows that the number of students enrolled in the lower secondary program is more than double than the number of students enrolled in the primary program, clearly indicating a high demand for SC programs at the lower secondary level.

Table 8. Number of Students Enrolled and Schools Providing SC Programs in 2018/2019, by Area

Second Chance Program	Students enrolled (2018/19)			Schools providing SC
	Primary	Lower secondary	Total	
Rural	1,521	2,796	4,317	126
Urban	3,322	7,052	10,374	200
Total	4,843	9,848	14,691	326

Source: MONE-SIIR, school year 2018/2019

At the end of 2018, MONE, with the support of the Institute of Educational Sciences and the World Bank, carried out the evaluation of the SC program in 41 schools.⁶⁹ The results of this evaluation revealed a series of positive aspects perceived by most stakeholders who argued that SC programs have contributed significantly to increasing self-esteem and enhancing the quality of life of its beneficiaries, higher employment prospects among graduates, flexibility in delivering the program to accommodate students' needs and work schedules. The evaluation showed that most SC students were lacking basic skills (literacy and numeracy) when joining the program, and this is where the program proved to be extremely useful and relevant because it helped them acquire or improve those skills they needed the most to get a job or become an active and more engaged citizen.

Also, some stakeholders (school principals and teachers) found that the SC program contributed to creating a more inclusive environment in the school. Nevertheless, the majority of schools do not provide SC programs even when there is demand, funds are available and regulations are flexible due to the complexity of SC delivery: the SC program requires specific expertise and skills in teaching and training adults, as well as an adequate infrastructure and facilities.⁷⁰

The program has some constraints that need to be addressed in the context of implementing education strategies, including the education infrastructure strategy. These constraints are:

- Complex logistics of setting up the program, challenges in implementation and institutional collaboration at all levels;
- Complex financial arrangement for paying teachers' salaries: teachers receive remuneration separately from their regular salaries, payments are based on an hourly average rate and are made via other funds;
- High requirements for teachers' qualifications, which is challenging for the delivery of SC programs in rural areas;
- Typical school infrastructure is not an appropriate environment for adult learning;
- The requirement for students to be at least four years above the grade-level age limits the number of SC participants.

⁶⁹ The evaluation of the SC program was carried out by MONE, with support from the Institute of Education Sciences and World Bank, in the context of monitoring and evaluation of national education strategies. In addition to desk research, MONE conducted a field research in 41 schools across Romania which included interviews and focus groups with SC program beneficiaries (students enrolled and recent graduates), school staff (principal, teachers), and school inspectors in charge of SC program at county level.

⁷⁰ The profile of the beneficiaries is also relevant: "People who cannot read and write, and cannot write an application"; "Women who haven't completed 8 grades, who would like to get a job"; "Men who would like to get a driving license"; "The employer asked them to complete 8 grades"; "Parents of children who were in School-after-School" (Marin et al., 2019).

Many stakeholders interviewed by the WB team outlined the need for revising and updating the existing regulations to allow for identification of potential beneficiaries of the SC program and provision of adequate support to all stakeholders involved in organizing and delivering the program. Hence, the proposed EWM provides tools for identifying children and youth who could benefit from SC programs which could lead to an expanded coverage, as well as effective targeting and interventions.

In areas where the supply of SC programs is limited or absent, other compensation measures for out-of-school children and youth in TG 2, 3 and 4 are available, such as evening high school classes, reduced frequency high school classes (this type of courses is also available to students who are more than three years over the grade-level age of compulsory education), as well as three-year vocational programs in vocational schools and technological high schools.

Another compensation measure delivered by schools is counseling and career guidance. Schools may organize, in cooperation with CJRAE or high schools and vocational schools, information and communication campaigns or counseling events for youth in TG4 identified in the Quick Census (together with lower secondary school students). As education and career decisions are usually made in the family, parents should be seen as part of the target group of vocational counseling and career guidance. There is a considerable experience of community events organized by the schools on the ground:

“Jointly with lower secondary schools, we have the Open Doors Day. [...] A group of students promote activities in the locality and tell the future students why they should choose this high school, what they can find here. We have an NGO in the school that is active too...[it] organizes promotional activities in school, with guests from the town hall, other NGOs, other schools and high schools from Roman. (Interview, North East Region)

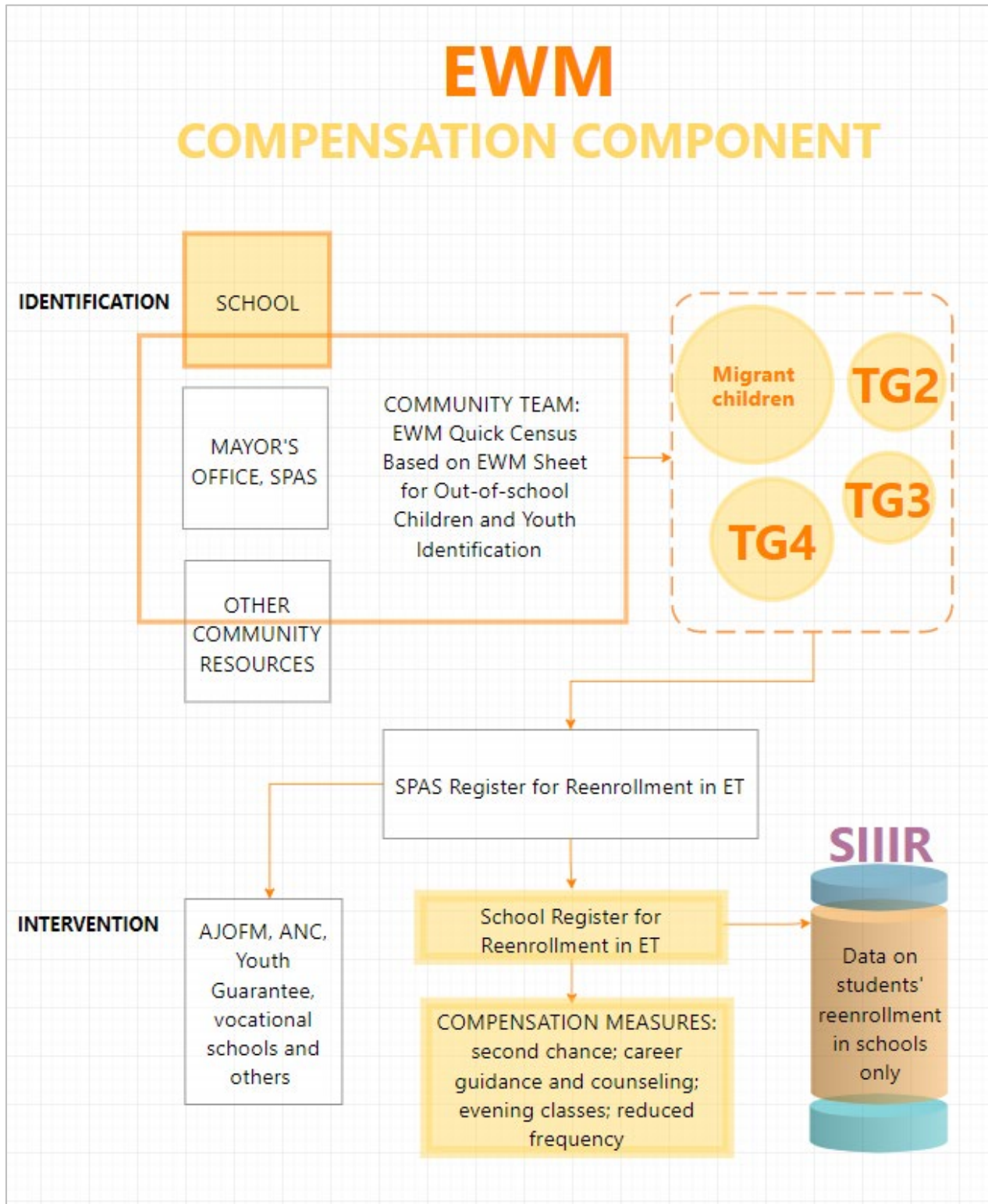
(Qualitative research conducted by MEN experts in 2018 to monitor the Strategy to Reduce Early School Leaving)

Participation in community events may increase the interaction between out-of-school children and youth and students, especially students at risk of ESL, that can be beneficial for all parties involved, including teachers. Out-of-school children and youth may be invited to attend school events and involved in various extracurricular activities in sports halls fields, computer rooms and other school facilities that can be made available. Volunteering projects run in partnership with NGOs can involve in- and out-of-school adolescents in caring for the elderly people who live alone or supporting families in extreme poverty. Finally, workshops on dealing with situations like dropout, poor performance, bullying, etc. are an important compensation measure, because they show how people can overcome difficulties, allow young people to share their experiences and are known to increase educational motivation.

The Second Chance education remains the main compensation policy implemented by the MONE. Compensation programs such as the Second Chance can be scaled up and expanded under the Education Law 1/2011 offering opportunities that have not yet been fully explored (including building pathways back into mainstream education, recognizing and validating prior learning). Under the Operational Program Human Capital (Axis 6—Competencies and Skills), the European Social Fund (ESF) is estimated to cover 41,000 graduates of the Second Chance Program. In order to use these funds, the SC Program must increase its supply by six times to cover the estimated beneficiaries. The development and implementation of SC programs should be focused on rural areas and deprived communities, including Roma, exactly where there is an insufficient number of SC places; the supply of SC education has to be increased without compromising its quality.

The design of the EWM compensation component, including both identification and implementation phases, is illustrated by *Infographic 6*.

Infographic 6. Overview of the EWM Compensation Component



4 Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring and reporting are fundamental elements of an effective implementation of the proposed EWM. Monitoring is the systematic observation of activities and the recording of data for control, understanding, and for predicting and adjusting the course of implementation. In the context of the proposed EWM, monitoring the data on all its elements helps to establish what measures work, what conditions enable success, and what factors hinder progress. Monitoring allows stakeholders, especially schools, to take immediate corrective actions.

The reporting system under the proposed EWM is based on data collected and consolidated from three data files produced under prevention, intervention and compensation components – *School Observatory*, *Register of Students at ESL Risk*, and *Register for Reenrollment in ET*, respectively.

Monitoring and reporting at the school level

The school, through the school principal, is in charge of monitoring the early warning signals (absences, grades and student behavior), the results of the SASAT applications and the measures/actions implemented by the school to enhance education quality and improve the school climate. In this sense, the school, through the school principal, is responsible for preparing an *EWM Progress Report* for each student identified as being at risk of dropout. The EWM Progress Report will be drafted quarterly by the designated case manager/class master and will include:

- ❑ Data and information on each student at risk (ID, residence, gender, grade, etc.);
- ❑ The list of education services provided to the student and/or parent and other measures taken, by level of intervention;
- ❑ The progress registered over the three-month period of EWM implementation.

The information included in this report could be also reflected in the school's Institutional Development Plan.

At the end of each school year, the school prepares the *School Progress Report to Address ESL* that reflects the results and measures implemented over the school year and has the same structure as the EWM covering prevention, intervention and compensation measures. The school principal is responsible for this report. At the same time, the school, through the designated staff responsible for registers, will update the *Register of Students at ESL Risk*, as applicable, on the basis of the EWM Progress Reports. The data collected by schools is uploaded to SIIIR, and from then on accessible at all levels of the education system: school, county UMATE, national UMATE.

The reports prepared at schools can be organized in two parts: quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative section can be created automatically, either by the preformatted databases (electronic spreadsheets) or by SIIIR, with the data put in by the school. The qualitative part should address the following topics:

ESL risks

- Brief description of the activities aimed at identifying students at risk of ESL, together with a description of main results: number of students identified as being at risk; student profile (gender, age, grade, disability/SEN), distribution of students by warning signals (truancy, academic underachievement, problematic behavior); student progress on the risk indicators;
- Main causes and combinations of risk factors affecting behavior among students at ESL risk.

Intervention coverage

- Number of students at ESL risk benefiting from interventions and measures by level (1, 2, 3 and 4) and their profile (gender, age, grade, disability/SEN);
- Main reasons for not covering all students identified as being at ESL risk, if the case;
- Number of parents receiving counseling, or any other services provided by the school.

Interventions and measures implemented by the school

- Brief description of measures by level (1, 2, 3 and 4) and education services provided by the school for at-risk students and/or their parents;
- Main challenges and obstacles during implementation.

Progress and achieved results

- Number of at-risk students declared successful;
- Lessons learned and the way forward for the next school year.

All the information to be collected by schools under the proposed EWM will be covered by the methodology for data collection and use, which is currently being developed. The methodology will take into account the different levels of data collection (school, county and national) and policy interventions. At the same time, the methodology will include recommendations on the use of SIIR and its extension with new modules allowing to track ESL warning signals, such as student attendance and achievement (grades). Once finalized, the methodology will be tested in 10 lower secondary schools in rural and small urban areas in order to learn what works in practice and what needs to be improved for an effective EWM implementation and for achieving the expected results, namely preventing and reducing ESL in Romania.

Monitoring and reporting at county level

The county UMATE is responsible for preparing the annual *County Progress Report to Address ESL* based on the reports received from the county's schools. The county-level report may use a comparative approach to identify best practices and lessons learned, as well as presentation of further interventions, actions and focus areas planned for the next school year. The county report may also focus on: services to be developed, and schools to be prioritized; needed human resources in terms of specialists at the county level, training needs for teachers and specialists; key rules and regulations to be developed or amended in order to facilitate interventions to prevent and reduce ESL.

Monitoring and reporting at the national level

The national UMATE is responsible for preparing the annual *National Progress Report to Address ESL* based on the information provided by each county UMATE. The national report will reflect the EWM application during the school year and reveal the key implementation challenges in schools and communities to be addressed by institutional and political stakeholders at the central and local levels. This report will support MONE in evidence-based planning and budgeting of future interventions and programs aiming at preventing and reducing ESL.

Apart from national UMATE, regular EWM monitoring will be carried out by the interinstitutional committee that will meet (either face to face or through video or telephone conferences) at least three times a year to take stock of the EWM progress, make strategic informed decisions whenever needed, discuss potential implementation issues, and agree on a revised timeline, if needed.

Moreover, based on the data and information in the UMATE national progress reports, the MONE will prepare two semiannual activity reports evaluating the relevance and quality of EWM-related interventions and services, as well as their effectiveness. One report will be released in September and will include an overview of EWM progress in the previous school year, as well as adjustments and plans for the new school year. The second interim report will be released in February and will present the status of activities, implementation challenges and proposals for next steps.

Dissemination and learning events

The commitment to planning, managing, implementing, and accounting for results is critical for achieving any development objectives. Successful implementation of the proposed EWM will require a high level of commitment, motivation, authority and leadership among the different stakeholders operating in education and social sectors at all levels. The design of the proposed EWM envisages an institutional support structure that will create and enhance institutional capacity at the national and county levels for an effective EWM implementation. This institutional support structure comprises county UMATE and national UMATE which are responsible for the coordination, technical support, monitoring and assessment of EWM implementation.

To make the EWM initiative successful, awareness campaigns are essential as a first step to introduce it, explain its rationale, and describe its working in a simple way to all stakeholders (schools, families, authorities, broader audiences). Simplified brochures, pamphlets should be used to communicate ideas about the benefits of the EWM and its implementation.

Another key aspect of EWM implementation is the communication and dissemination of best practices, as well as results and key lessons learned. The MONE, through county and national UMATE, needs to ensure visibility and transparency of EWM interventions and results by disseminating information and organizing events to engage potential stakeholders and partners.

To this end, it is recommended that representatives from national and county UMATE organize and participate in a national event to present findings, conclusions and recommendations reflected in county reports. Several national and local stakeholders (e.g. representatives from the MONE and its subordinated agencies, the Ministry of Labor and Social Justice, General Directorate for Social Assistance and Child Protection (DGASPC), local services and authorities, national and local NGOs, and other relevant partners) may be invited to participate in this national event. This event will provide all stakeholders with the opportunity to learn, discuss and plan EWM interventions for the next school year.

In addition to the national event, regular exchanges between MONE and UMATE and county units are to be welcomed, at least on a quarterly basis, to discuss on the progress of EWM implementation, work plan, schedule of project activities and next steps. It is recommended to invite at least one representative of the UMATE national or county to attend relevant events or activities. In addition, round tables and workshops may be organized at county and national levels to disseminate EWM results, key challenges, as well as other relevant information for preventing and reducing ESL.

5 Implementation Challenges and Recommendations

The EWM goal is to contribute to a reduction in the level of early school leaving in Romania in order to enhance cohesion, competitiveness, sustainable growth and job creation. MONE is engaged in the development of an EWM focusing on children and young people either at risk of dropping out of school or outside the education system. This requires, on the one hand, a coherent methodological framework for **detection, identification and intervention measures** and, on the other hand, **an institutional architecture** of specialized human resources able to provide efficient services supporting the completion of compulsory education by all children. The enabling condition for creating an EWM that will work and generate results in the next six years is **securing financing and designating EWM a flagship national program**.

The proposed EWM includes an integrated comprehensive package of measures grouped by interventions category and phase (identification, assessment, planning, implementation and monitoring), a **toolkit** containing EWM document templates and examples of activities, and an **action plan** to coordinate and implement the interventions. The EWM will be coupled with **a data collection methodology** (to be developed separately under this Agreement) aimed at allowing easy access to relevant data from a variety of access points (schools, local social services etc.) and feeding it into policy decisions and policy implementation on the ground. This also requires a stronger involvement of families and other local stakeholders, in line with the "whole school system approach" highlighted in the European Commission Communication COM(2017)248. A whole school approach implies that the "whole school together with external stakeholders and the local community engage to improve school quality".

Several types of challenges are expected during the implementation of the proposed EWM, including structural and systemic, difficult to address unless two key conditions are met: (i) political commitment to resolve the ESL issue on the basis children's rights approach; and (ii) shared responsibility and collaboration at the local level between stakeholders working in different public sectors, especially education and social assistance. Further challenges are expected to arise in connection with the three risks described below.

Risk	Description
<i>Increased inequality between rural and urban areas, Roma and non-Roma communities</i>	In Romania there are both rural and urban communities (Roma, non-Roma and mixed) living in marginalized areas, where children and youth live in families without resources to cope with the complex challenges they face. The quality and coverage of social services in these areas is insufficient and distributed uneven. Discriminatory attitudes towards Roma, people with disabilities, children with special educational needs, and children in the special protection system are widespread. Provision of integrated services of the kind envisaged by the proposed EWM is very limited, therefore, EWM implementation in such areas will require consistent and long-term support in order to produce tangible changes.
<i>Lack of supply of diversified education services at the local level</i>	The ET network remains underdeveloped and undiversified, especially in rural and small urban areas. The out-of-school children and youth will benefit from alternative ET, such as evening classes, distance learning, community centers providing lifelong learning opportunities, relevant vocational schools at upper secondary and tertiary level.
<i>Insufficient monitoring and evaluation activities and reporting for genuine reflection and accountability</i>	Reporting is widely seen as a bureaucratic burden, and reports are all too often believed to be useless documents that no one reads. In line with such attitudes, reporting and dissemination following monitoring and evaluation activities are rated as a formality, and dissemination is limited to displaying the report on the notice board or publishing it on the website. Turning reports into working tools for further informed decision making and dissemination into a transparent learning process is a challenge.

In the process of designing the EWM and the Action Plan, and during consultations with stakeholders, further challenges were identified:

1. Creating an adequate functional institutional arrangement and revising governance arrangements, especially addressing fragmentation and overlapping of roles and responsibilities.
2. Increasing participation in and quality of lower secondary education in order to reduce ESL.
3. Providing adequate funding allocations and a solid legal framework.

The following six recommendations address the identified challenges to EWM implementation.

Recommendation 1. Create functional institutional arrangements and legal framework

While the proposed EWM includes the needed institutional support structure, its functionality will depend on the operational management and UMATE responsibilities at the central and county levels. MONE should establish UMATE as a Project Management Unit composed of relevant MONE staff and should ensure the necessary coordination mechanisms within relevant stakeholders. The county level UMATE shall consult and cooperate with the MONE Project Management Team at all major stages of the activities to be implemented. The county level UMATE will provide input for the monitoring and reporting activities, recommendations and reviews of the activity planning. Operational progress reporting in the form of an implementation table briefly reviewing the progress for the period covered and describing possible difficulties encountered and measures taken, as well as providing information on achieved results, will be provided by the county UMATE to MONE on a half-yearly basis.

Importantly, the UMATE at MONE level will undertake, from the EWM initiation stage through implementation, intense information and communication activities to ensure the synergy of county support networks and collaboration with schools. The staff assigned to perform the activities will consist of professionals with valuable local experience in each of the following fields: class instruction, counselling services, socio-emotional skills, education management information system, data analysis and report writing, social assistance and community expertise.

In terms of the necessary legal framework, the EWM should be formally established either through a joint ministerial order signed by the Minister of Education and Minister of Labor or (at least) by the Minister of Education. Subsequently, a National Program to Reduce ESL should be established by a government decision as stipulated by the National Education Law no 1/2011. The secondary legislation consisting of operational procedures is mandatory at the ministerial level; it will ensure adequate functioning of the program and clarify of roles and responsibilities related to the identification and enrollment of: i) children who have never been enrolled in school (TG2); ii) early school leavers under the age of 18 (TG3); iii) early school leavers aged 18 to 24 (TG4) and iv) migrant children. For the migrant children, the monitoring framework developed by the UNICEF proposes an international or EU school passport for school records of children who leave their country; the passport may include a multilingual student profile, scores, and grades attended to facilitate the integration into the European education systems.⁷¹

The following provisions that regulate and facilitate the implementation of EWM measures in the classroom, school and community need to be updated: i) School after School Program for children in disadvantaged groups; ii) Second Chance Program; iii) integrated community services and multidisciplinary teams have to be established.

In order to increase the likelihood of successful EWM implementation, the proposed EWM envisages the formal set up of an Interinstitutional Coordination Committee, preferably at the level of General Secretariat of the Government to ensure the overall coordination of the EWM institutional support structure, as well as a higher-level capacity to mobilize education and social stakeholders as well as local authorities.

⁷¹ Van Cappelle & Bell (2016).

Recommendation 2. Establish and finance a National Program to Reduce ESL using the EWM

A National Program to Reduce ESL is the key to the implementation of a time bound, evidence based and cost-effective EWM action plan. More specifically, the entire mechanism and associated action plan will depend on the development of a National Program for implementing an appropriate and reliable EWM to allow an integrated and systemic approach at local, regional and national levels. The National Program should be set up through a Governmental Decision and based on the Article 111 paragraph (1) lit. a) and Article 223 of the National Education Law nr. 1/2011. The key players in this National Program will be the schools and the SPAS, who should be strongly and actively connected in delivering quality results to beneficiaries (students, parents and the whole community and society. According to the international practice in ESL prevention, the three levers of a sustainable EWM (the triple A) are: (i) school **autonomy** to use resources; (ii) **accountability** for the outcomes; and (iii) **assessment** in terms of tracking students.

The National Program will use key performance indicators (KPIs) that are observable and measurable descriptors of the current situation and expected results. They focus is on the following factors: inputs, activities and processes, outputs, outcomes and impact as shown in the table below.

Input/Resources	Process/Activity	Output: Immediate Result Outcome: Following Result Impact: Ultimate Result
1. Funds for the National Program to carry out the measures in schools addressing the needs of children at risk ESL 2. Principals, teachers, social assistance and school administrative staff; county level school inspectors and counsellors; experts in the ministry 3. UMATE- the program management unit. 4. Tools and templates	Implement EWM through a National Program 1. Schools previously classified under a risk category are identified to become part of the National Program. 2. The MONE UMATE and county UMATE are established to manage the National Program. 3. A budget per school is allocated based on the regulatory framework in place at the time, number of students enrolled and out-of-school children in respective locality. 4. Grant contracts between MONE and Schools are signed. 5. The Ministry of Education finances the National Program from its own budget via county inspectorates to school accounts 6. Schools and SPAS under the Grant Contracts identify children/youth at risk and implement a menu of activities derived from the type of component and the Education Service Plan. 7. The UMATE monitors the student attendance for financing purposes and milestones and results against targets for reporting and policy review purpose. 8. Review yearly the results and make decision on the next year implementation.	Immediate term: Number of children at risk identified and treated Medium term: No of children at risk treated who have not left school Medium term: Decrease in dropout rate and early school leaving rate Long term: Changes in the work career trajectory of children at risk who were identified, treated and completed school

The MONE should explore the possibility of financing the National Program to Reduce ESL using EU funds. The financing could be based on the Simplified Cost Option (SCO) promoted by the European Commission (EC). The SCO is the declaration of expenditure based on flat rates, standard scales of unit costs and lump sums as an alternative to the traditional “real costs” approach. SCO is the EC’s key instrument for delivering its simplification agenda and the move towards a results-based management approach. The rules and principles for the design and implementation of SCO are set out in the Common Provisions Regulation (CPR)

and in funds-specific Regulations.⁷² The CPR (Articles 67 and 68) includes options for calculating eligible SCO's expenditure of grants and repayable assistance on the basis of flat rate financing, standard scales of unit costs and lump sums. A survey carried out by the ESF Thematic Network on Simplification in 2016, based on 257 practices implemented by 21 member states, shows that SCO have been used, among other projects, for: primary and secondary education; social inclusion actions; support or development of social services. The same survey also highlights that a very wide range of beneficiaries have been involved in implementing operations covered by SCO: NGOs; schools; universities; training centers; national and subnational public entities; public employment services providers; municipalities and local authorities; private entities, including companies and sole traders; providers of social care services, care givers; and professional associations.⁷³

In Romania, the following regulations make it possible to apply SCOs in the field of education:

- COMMISSION DELEGATED REGULATION (EU) 2017/2016 of 29 August 2017 amending Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2015/2195 on supplementing Regulation (EU) No. 1304/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Social Fund, regarding the definition of standard scales of unit costs and lump sums for reimbursement of expenditure by the Commission to Member States.
- Order no. 1955/1995 of the Minister of Health approving the hygiene norms of the units for care, education and training of children and youth.
- Law no. 1/2011 – Law on National Education – lays the principles of financing pre-university education.
- Government Decision no. 959/2017 approving the methodological norms for determining the standard cost per student/pre-schooler for 2018 and establishing core funding of public pre-university education institutions.
- Order no.5079/2016 of the Education Minister – Framework regulation on the organization and function of pre-university educational units.
- Order 4742/2016 on the Student Statute.

The EC regulation establishes the per capita financing for students enrolled in lower secondary education in Romania at **EUR 1,217** per year. The estimated budget for schools carrying out activities under the proposed National Program can be calculated on the basis of this reference amount for all students attending the lower secondary education level. In this context, UMATE would estimate the school budget to be allocated under the National Program to Reduce ESL considering all students attending, although the interventions will be mostly focused on the students at risk, which in the case of these schools includes the majority of students. As such, the allocation and use of funds will target the schools at ESL risk in order to improve the equity of the system in an effective way. The financing level is very high considering the high number of students at risk. For illustration purposes, in order to support 200,000 students per year (available data show 100,000 early school leavers and 100,000 children and youth out-of-school) there is a need for an additional annual budget of **EUR 243 million**. A different calculation scenario can be made with the data on lagging schools. There are about 3.425 schools considered lagging given the average grade at the 2018 national exam below 6. Financing 20 percent of these schools, i.e. 685 schools, would require **EUR 125 million** per year.

⁷² Regulation (EU) No. 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006.

⁷³ World Bank, 2018 Output 7 – Report documenting the consultation activities with government and European Commission stakeholders on the SCO framework under Advisory Services Agreement on Technical Assistance for Supporting the Implementation of Romania's Human Capital Operational Programme (POCU) 2014-2020.

Recommendation 3. Collect, monitor and use data regularly, in direct connection with SIIR

There will be challenges related to the collection and use of data pertaining to the groups at ESL risk even after the EWM is in place. First of all, there are many children who are not properly identified and monitored in any system. Secondly, the services of social protection, medical assistance, etc. are fragmented and uncoordinated. Fragmentation and lack of coordination will be addressed by the data collection methodology that will support the proposed EWM.

As part of a broader project financed by the European Social Fund (ESF), MONE contracted the World Bank to provide technical assistance for capacity development for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the implementation of education strategies. In this context, the M&E methodology already prepared by the Bank supports accelerating strategy implementation and achievement of targeted results. The development of the methodology for data collection to support the proposed EWM implementation (to be prepared separately under this Agreement) will build on the already available M&E methodology.

The methodology for data collection will assemble data from different sources. With the basic data and information collected at the school and community level, the data on early school leaving will be integrated with contextual data such as socio-economic information, census data, births registry, etc.

In this context, there is a need to fine-tune SIIR as a platform where data, such as attendance and grades, will be recorded and traced in order to map all the factors that could trigger ESL. The data collection system requires reliable, accurate and timely information on early school leaving rates, on transitions between education levels, enrolment rates and completion rates of lower and upper secondary education, as well as on school absenteeism and school-avoiding behaviour.

The methodology for data collection will provide recommendations on the use of SIIR modules, and any necessary SIIR improvements for recording key factors affecting ESL that are not currently covered in SIIR (e.g. attendance, grades). The recommendations should take into account the different levels of data collection (national, county, local) and also the different levels of policy interventions (national, county, local).

Recommendation 4. Coordinate between sectors and institutions

MONE should be responsible for the overall coordination of the implementation of activities under the proposed EWM, maintaining regular communication with all stakeholders and beneficiaries on taking stock of the EWM implementation, and reporting on progress towards reducing ESL. The activities shall be undertaken in close collaboration with the lower management level, at the county level, through inspectorates, and at the local level, through schools.

In order to facilitate the implementation of the EWM, the MONE:

- shall be responsible for involving other services, such as SPAS, where appropriate;
- shall also support the appropriate involvement of inspectorates and schools for the smooth execution of activities;
- shall provide the public with relevant documents, reports and findings concerning EWM implementation;
- shall have regular exchanges, at least on a quarterly basis, on the progress of EWM implementation, on the work plan, schedule of project activities and next steps through its units and the national UMATE; a representative of the unit at national or county level shall be invited to attend relevant events or activities; to facilitate the organization and efficiency of the activities, sharing in a timely manner the relevant documents is key.

Institutional coordination arrangements are also important at the local level. The EWM maps the local stakeholders, highlighting their roles and responsibilities in the coordination arrangement. Schools represent the main dialogue initiator in the discussion with local authorities, social services structures or child protection. The institutional support structure for EWM, through the Interinstitutional Committee for Reducing ESL and the county UMATE, is expected to facilitate the cohesion of the coordination arrangement.

Coordinating efforts to increase the use of funds under the Human Capital Operational Programme (POCU) is key. POCU is the main funding mechanism for the 2014—2020 programming period targeting investments in employment, education, poverty alleviation and support for social services. As a beneficiary of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), Romania receives EUR 4.3 billion to improve employment opportunities; promote education and life-long learning; enhance social inclusion; contribute to combating poverty; and improve public services. The program pays special attention to youth, Roma, and marginalized communities.

Better coordination between sectors and institutions will facilitate and increase the performance of the POCU program allowing for a more effective and efficient in spending of EU and national budget resources. At the same time, broader participation of relevant stakeholders in the preparation for the upcoming 2021—2027 Programming Period is required, especially to bring in lessons learned from the experience of the current programming period.

The proposed EWM should be also used in the context of the National Strategy of the Government for the Inclusion of Romanian Citizens Belonging to the Roma Minority. For example, the results of the ESL related interventions under this strategy are not fully grasped. The Local Action Plans and County Plans for Roma inclusion are generally embedding superficial and unrealistic provisions for M&E procedures. The analysis of the progress of the measures of this strategy is hampered by poor quality data. Therefore, the proposed EWM should be seen as an important transversal monitoring instrument that could contribute to the design and implementation of local action plans or county plans for Roma inclusion based on evidence. In this context, institutional coordination arrangements with the National Agency for Roma should be enhanced in order to ensure complementarity, availability of data, etc.

Another important coordination area derives from the link between the measures to reduce ESL and employment. Early school leavers do not possess employment relevant skills to enter the labor market. Compensation measures support them to acquire the necessary skills and competences by re-integrating the early leavers into the education system. However, the transition to employment could be facilitated at the level of deconcentrated structures of the National Agency for Employment. The employment counsellors could play an active role not only in the frame of the compensation component, but also in the frame of the prevention component. To reach out to the maximum number of young people at risk, a closer collaboration with the National Agency for Employment is very important. Local employment agency mentors or mediators could be involved to work closely with schools, under the EWM prevention component.

Recommendation 5. Communicate transparently and report data publicly on an annual basis

According to the proposed EWM reporting requirements, a national level report will include data collected at all educational levels, starting from early childhood education and care to upper secondary education but focusing on the lower secondary level. The indicators to be reported are related to attendance, repetition, completion, student achievement, teacher performance and expenditures. Decision makers, stakeholders and members of the public will be able to follow these indicators and see the progress in achieving objectives and targets. The reporting system is expected to facilitate the adjustment of policies, to provide external parties with information for review, as well as to enhance transparency for the public.

The Interinstitutional Committee will meet (either face to face or through video or telephone conferences) at least three times a year to take stock of project progress, take strategic decisions whenever necessary, discuss any possible issues arising in the EWM implementation and agree on a revised timetable if needed. The MONIE will prepare activity reports twice a year:

- in September to present an overview of the achievements of the last school year and the adjustment and planning for the new school year; and
- in February to present an interim report with the status of activities, challenges met and a draft to discuss next steps.

MONE shall be responsible for the implementation of the recommendations in these reports and shall consult with relevant ministries, as appropriate, prior to the publication of the final report. The reports should reflect the extent to which services were provided in a timely manner, were relevant and of a technical quality to achieve its objectives. Factors such as ownership, community engagement, and timeliness are considered to be important determinants of positive outcomes. The MONE will seek to give maximum visibility to the EWM, disseminating information and organising events to engage potential partners and stakeholders. Whenever possible and appropriate, press releases and media activities should be undertaken to present findings, acknowledge progress and discuss next steps.

The reporting system of the proposed EWM is based on data consolidated from three data files: School Observatory, Register of Students at ESL Risk, and Register for Reenrollment in ET. The data files are expected to be linked to SIIR, so that the data is centralized and accessible at all levels - school, county UMATE, national UMATE.

The SIIR upgrade is essential and corresponds to the following key tasks:

- (a) Expansion of data entry variable and module required for the operation of EWM, with appropriate security rules and levels.
- (b) Development of a public report template that allows access to the quantitative data at school, county and national level. With this automation function, the module will generate reports and improve data use.
- (c) School staff training to access, input, validate, interpret and report data. Such a training will generate incentives at school level for accessing school level reports that can inform future action plans, especially in developing appropriate classroom-level measures and personalized education services plans.

The SIIR upgrade development will take place while the EWM is already in implementation, requiring some transitory data protocols to be further uploaded, converted or transferred into SIIR.

Recommendation 6. Periodically train staff involved in the EWM and share experience and good practice

Training will be provided for the identification and tracking of students at risk of ESL and for the effective integration and use of data in policy decisions. The training recipients should include MONE staff assigned to monitoring ESL prevention activities, county school inspectorates' staff, school principals, teachers, and administrative staff. It is expected that this group, having received training, guidance, best practice examples and various forms of feedback and practical support, will be able to implement and scale up the use of the EWM on the ground, and enact the necessary institutional and regulatory changes needed for full implementation.

Training topics are diverse and related to prevention and addressing ESL: how to modernize classroom instruction, improve school climate, increase school attractiveness through building socio-emotional skills, provide parental support and education, increase reliance on inclusive teaching practices. Training should not be limited to providing courses but be complemented by coaching, mentoring and support provided by county inspectors and expert teachers. Moreover, the e-learning school platform⁷⁴ managed by MONE is a great resource for disseminating lessons, regulations, sharing experiences and models.

County UMATEs are expected to play an important role in facilitating the training of mentors and coaches and school level specialists. The activity of the EWM support structure, apart from coordination, technical assistance and monitoring, plays an important role in identifying the ongoing training needs. It can fill specific gaps by providing local support with skills like school counselling, speech therapy, behavioral psychology, multidisciplinary or holistic approach. However, there is a short supply of training specialist providers but also of specialists providing counselling and other specific support services at the local level, especially in vulnerable and rural communities. In addition, most certainly IT specialists will need to be hired

⁷⁴ <http://www.elearning.ro/>. Setting up, managing, and continuously updating the e-learning school platform (and of the Virtual School Library) falls under the responsibility of MEN.

for expanding SIIR. In addition, the county UMATE ties the schools and the upper level, being the transmission belt for the dissemination of information.

In view of knowledge sharing and a successful EWM implementation, creating community of practices at county/local level for each component should be considered. This could strengthen the cooperation between practitioners and would contribute to an increased ownership of EWM implementation.

6 EWM Action Plan

The operational action plan for reducing early school leaving is drafted on the basis of the current national strategic framework, European best practice and the proposed EWM. The implementation of this action plan will depend on the consistent *effort on the part of Romanian national authorities* to regulate the institutional and operational process necessary to put in place an effective early warning and data collection system for preventing early school leaving.

The multiannual action plan for the implementation of the proposed mechanism includes key elements such as activities, responsibilities, timeline, clear links between proposed actions and instruments to be used. This approach is based on the MONE National Strategy for Reducing ESL, including through the utilization of European Structural and Investment Funds in the programming period 2014—2020 and in the upcoming period 2021—2027. The beneficiaries and key stakeholders to be involved in the implementation of the mechanism were consulted during the EWM preparation process. The Action Plan is directly addressed to key implementing bodies: MONE's relevant directorates, county school inspectorates, school management, social assistance services, local authorities.

The Action Plan is explained in detail in the table in section 6.1. The Action Plan clusters the activities under prevention, intervention and compensation components in four phases: identification, assessment and planning, implementation and monitoring. The activities are presented in their logical sequence with references to the tools to be used at each phase and level of interventions.

The proposed EWM and action plan reflect feedback received from relevant stakeholders (around 160 people) during consultations at local, county and central levels. The next step under this Agreement includes the preparation of a methodology for data collection and testing the mechanism and the methodology in 10 schools in both rural and urban areas. The testing phase will allow EWM adjustments and fine tuning. This testing exercise does not substitute the piloting that the MONE should consider eventually under a subsequent project before scaling up the mechanism to the national level. A preparatory phase preceding piloting and rolling out at the national level will ensure effective implementation of this mechanism in the field.

During the preparatory phase, the EWM institutional structure should be established at the central and county levels, and relevant staff of institutional support structures should receive training. At the same time, county UMATEs will carry out intense communication activities with the local decision makers. EWM-related materials (brochures, guides) will be disseminated at the local level, to schools, local authorities and the civil society. SIIIR will be updated with new EWM variables already described in the section 5 of this document. After these preparatory steps are carried out the mechanism will be ready for implementation.

The entire work around the actions planned for the implementation of the EWM is structured around the following principles:

- **Collaboration** between education institutions from all levels and other institutions with responsibilities in the protection of children's rights. The cases requiring integrated interventions (from level 4) are those that require close collaboration and shared responsibility given the immediate effects for the children and their families. Interinstitutional memorandums and agreements are effective when they support joint actions.
- **Proactivity and respecting the tight deadlines** proposed for the activities under this Action Plan as they are strictly correlated with the school year structure. Currently, activities are planned to be initiated just before the school year start with the identification phase, continuing with planning until mid-November and implementing the package of measures from December until June next year. A review of interventions planned for the second semester takes place in February;

- **Communication and dissemination of activities, milestones and results** during of the EWM implementation. Report dissemination, workshops for sharing experience, discussing best and worst practices, and success and failure factors should be organized and systematically monitored by the county and national UMATEs. The main goal of M&E and reporting is to identify areas that need adjustment, so it has to be made clear to stakeholders that monitoring is not undertaken in order to control beneficiaries, but in order to improve the EWM performance, which, in its turn, will translate into better outcomes for many out of school children and youth. The role of the EWM institutional support structure is to prepare the adjustments agenda for decision makers at all levels to consider and implement the necessary adjustments, including the legal and financial provisions.

6.1 Action Plan for EWM Implementation

Steps	Type of Measure	Activities	Actors Responsible	Deadline/Timeline
1. Identification	Prevention TG1	Monitor early warning signals aggregated at classroom level: absences, grades, behavior	School (school principal and class masters)	After first school month, and at the end of first school semester
		Survey students with the SASAT.ro questionnaire to measure parental support, school climate and student aspirations. Students fill in the SASAT questionnaire that is handed out by the class master on a voluntary basis, after receiving parental consent. Answers will be anonymous.	School (class masters)	At the beginning of each school semester
	Intervention TG1	Identify, separately, students at risk of dropping out and students in the process of dropping out. Class master fills in the EWM Observation Sheet for all students.	School (teachers and class masters)	In 1 week after the end of first school month Ongoing update for cases occurring during the school year
	Intervention TG1	Aggregate the Observation Sheets into the School Observatory .	School staff responsible for SIIIR operations	In 2-3 days; regular updates for cases occurring during the school year
	Compensation TG2, 3 and 4 and migrant children	Conduct the EWM Quick Census to identify TG2, 3, 4 and migrant children with the EWM Sheet for Out-of-School Children and Youth Identification . This activity requires coordination between the schools, local administration and social services.	SPAS & the school, school principal and mayor	Any time during the calendar year before school year opening
	Compensation	Record out-of-school children and youth (TG2, 3 and 4) in the Register for Reenrollment in ET , at community level.	SPAS	In 1 to 2 months from data collection
	Compensation	Proceed with the enrollment of TG2, 3 and 4 in different tracks in schools (primary, lower secondary, VET and upper secondary, full-time or part-time and Second Chance).		
	Compensation TG4	Disseminate the Register for Reenrollment in ET of the TG4 to schools, local employment agencies, accredited training providers, vocational schools, Youth Guarantee program.	SPAS	In 2 weeks
	Compensation	Upload data from the Register for Reenrollment in ET into SIIIR only for students actually reintegrated in education system (secondary education and VET schools).	School	In 2 weeks after receiving data from SPAS

Steps	Type of Measure	Activities	Actors Responsible	Deadline/Timeline
2.Assessment& Planning	Prevention	Prepare School Activity Plan as part of the multiannual Institutional Development Plan based on the analysis of the initial warning signals and SASAT.ro data.	School	Annually
	Intervention	Fill in the EWM Assessment Sheet for TG1 students.	School (teachers and class masters)	1 week
	Intervention	Consolidate data in the Register of Students at ESL Risk .	School staff responsible for SIIR	1 week
	Intervention	Develop Education Services Plan for each student at risk.	School (prevention case manager)	In 2 weeks
	Intervention	Sign the agreement to implement the Education Services Plan .	School, student, and parents	1 to 2 weeks
	Compensation	Fill in the EWM Assessment Sheet and Register of Students at ESL Risk following the development of an Education Services Plan for students reintegrated in the education system.	School, student and parents	1 month
3.Implementation	Prevention	Provide Level 1 measures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create positive classroom climate and motivate students through praise&reward system and project teamwork; • Use active learning techniques; facilitate learning, understanding and critical thinking applicable to real-life experiences; provide feedback; • Build socio-emotional skills, including autonomy, perseverance, social, communication and collaborative skills; • Organize mentoring and peer support in the classroom. 	School	Over 6 months from December to June
	Intervention	Provide Level 2 measures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide education services according to the plan and monitor their delivery every 3 months; • Provide level 1 measures plus counselling, remedial lessons and more interactions with family and students; • Participate in community cultural events, etc. 	Classroom master/case manager	Over 6 months from December to June
	Intervention	Review the Education Services Plan to maintain level 2 services or move to level 3.	Classroom master/case manager	2 weeks after 3-month delivery of education services

Steps	Type of Measure	Activities	Actors Responsible	Deadline/Timeline
	Intervention	<p>Provide level 3 measures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide level 1 and 2 measures plus parental counselling, and psychological therapy; • Engage community resources (mediator, social worker, volunteers, NGOs). 	Classroom master/case manager	Over 6 months from December to June
	Intervention	Refer the case to SPAS or DGASPC in case level 3 measures fail. The school will appoint a specialist (case manager, classroom master, school counselor or a teacher) to be part of a team providing integrated community services coordinated by SPAS.	Classroom master/case manager	2 weeks after the evaluation of the 3-month delivery of services
		<p>Provide Level 4 measures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report potential risk situations like abuse, violence, exploitation, and child labor; • Organize peer support system in school, counselling, therapy, and appropriate measures from levels 1, 2, and 3. 	SPAS	Over 6 months from December to June
	Compensation	Facilitate enrollment in Second Chance programs, evening classes or reduced frequency courses, as appropriate. Provide career guidance and counseling.	SPAS School	Ongoing
4. Monitoring	Prevention/ intervention/ compensation	Prepare EWM Progress Report for every student at risk.	Case manager, class master and school principal	Quarterly
		Update the Register of Students at ESL Risk with data from EWM Progress Reports.	Staff responsible for Register	As needed
		Prepare the School Progress Report to Address ESL reflecting the measures implemented and results achieved over the school year. The report consists of prevention, intervention and compensation sections.	School principals	Annually
		Prepare County Progress Report to Address ESL based on the reports received from the schools	County UMATE	
		Prepare National Progress Report to Address ESL based on data from the county level and reflect on the EWM application.	National UMATE	Annually
		Participate in a national event to present findings, conclusions and recommendation extracted from county reports and plan for the next school year.	County UMATE, National UMATE	Annually

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Appendix 1. List of Participants in Consultations - Central Level

	Institution	Person interviewed	Position
(1)	General Directorate for Strategic Management and Public Policies	Valentin Popescu	Director
(2)	Unit for the funding of pre-university education	Marineta Popa	Director
(3)	National Center for the Development of Vocational Education and Training and the Technical group responsible for monitoring the VET national strategic framework	Dalia Daramus	Director
(4)	National Qualifications Authority and the Technical group responsible for monitoring the LLL national strategic framework	Tiberiu Dobrescu	President
(5)	Project Management Unit for the Modernization of the School and University Network and the Technical group responsible for monitoring the INVESTMENTS IN SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE national strategic framework	Horia Palmer Hîrtopanu	Director
(6)	Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-university Education	Serban Iosifescu	President
(7)	Institute for Education Sciences	Irina Horga	Head of the Educational Policies Lab
(8)	Ministry of Labor and Social Justice - Projects for Integrated Services	Elena Dobre, Olivia Rusandu, Dorina Vicol, Vergilia Florea, Gabriela Necşuliu	Director and project team for Integrated services project
(9)	National Authority for the Protection of Child's Rights and Adoption	Simona Oproiu	Head of Service
(10)	National Agency for Roma	Daniel Radulescu	President
(11)	UNICEF Romania	Luminița Costache	Education Specialist
(12)	Roma Education Fund	Claudiu Ivan	Roma Policies Expert
(13)	Asociația Împreună	Gelu Duminiță	President
(14)	World Vision	Manuela Gazibar, Mariana Arnăutu	Monitoring and evaluation manager Manager RESCUE Project
(15)	Teach for Romania	Agnes Tolescu	Responsible for monitoring
(16)	Child Helpline	Cătălina Surcel	President
(17)	Save the Children	Liliana Bilbac	Program Coordinator
(18)	Constanta Students` Association	Andrei Mihai Tănase and Ana Maria Groza	President/ President of the Bucharest Branch
(19)	Association of Communes in Romania	Sergiu Tara	Executive President
(20)	Chitila School	Vali Duminiță	School principal

ROMANIA

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OUTPUT 1

A Proposed Early Warning Mechanism for Early School Leaving Prevention and Proposed Action Plan for Implementation

Annex I - TOOLKIT for Early Warning Mechanism Implementation

October 2019



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1. EWM Tool for Prevention Component

1.1. SASAT Questionnaire

Success At School Assessment Tool

Dear student,

This questionnaire aims at learning about your opinions on school and the process of studying, itself. There are no right or wrong answers. All the information will be treated as confidential, so we encourage you to answer honestly. For each of the questions below, please circle a single answer that you find best reflects your opinion.

The grade you are enrolled in this year	1. 5th	2. 6th	3. 7th	4. 8th
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Section A: You and your family

A1. Thinking about your parents, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel that I can trust my parents as someone to talk to.	1	2	3	4	5
If I talk to my parents, I think they will try to understand how I feel.	1	2	3	4	5
When I feel bad about something, my parents will listen.	1	2	3	4	5
If I'm having trouble with my schoolwork, I can go to my parents for help.	1	2	3	4	5
If I'm having a social or personal problem, my parents would have advice about what to do.	1	2	3	4	5

A2. Thinking about your parents, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My parents make sure that I do my homework.	1	2	3	4	5
My parents make sure that I go to school every day.	1	2	3	4	5
My parents praise me when I do well in school.	1	2	3	4	5
My parents give me the support I need to do well in school.	1	2	3	4	5
My parents talk to me about my future.	1	2	3	4	5
My parents believe that education is important to succeed in life.	1	2	3	4	5

A4. What are your parents' expectations regarding your education?

1. I don't know; I don't think they have any expectations regarding my education.
2. To complete 8 grades and leave education after that.
3. To complete 10 grades without a qualification certificate.
4. To complete high school (12 grades) even if I don't manage to get a Baccaulaureate diploma.
5. To complete a vocational school or dual education with a qualification diploma, and maybe get a job.
6. To complete high school (12 grades) with the Baccaulaureate diploma.
7. To continue my education with a post-secondary or foreman school.
8. To continue my education and get a Bachelor degree, maybe even a Master degree and a PhD.

Section B: At school

B1. Thinking about your school, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I think that this is a good school.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel like a real part of this school.	1	2	3	4	5
I would recommend to other kids that they go to my school.	1	2	3	4	5

B2. Thinking about your education, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Trying hard at school will help me get a good job.	1	2	3	4	5
Trying hard at school will help me go to college/university.	1	2	3	4	5
Getting a good education is the best way to get ahead in life.	1	2	3	4	5

B4. Thinking about your teachers, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel that I can trust my teachers as people to talk to.	1	2	3	4	5
If I talk to my teachers, I think they will try to understand how I feel.	1	2	3	4	5
When I feel bad about something, my teachers will listen.	1	2	3	4	5

If I'm having trouble with my schoolwork, I can go to my teachers for help.	1	2	3	4	5
If I'm having a social or personal problem, my teachers would have advice about what to do.					
If I'm having a social or personal problem, my counselor or mediator would have advice about what to do.	1	2	3	4	5

B5. Thinking about your class, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?					
In class...	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
... the teacher has to wait a long time for students to quieten down.	1	2	3	4	5
... students do not listen to what the teacher says.	1	2	3	4	5
... there is noise and disorder.	1	2	3	4	5

B6. In the last 12 months, how often have each of the following happened to you?					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
It is easy to find a friend among colleagues.					
Been upset by being called hurtful names by other students (including getting text messages or emails from them).	1	2	3	4	5
Other students at school made you give them money or personal possessions.	1	2	3	4	5
Other students threatened to hit you, kicked you or used any other form of violence against you.	1	2	3	4	5
Other students actually hit you, kicked you or used any other form of violence against you.	1	2	3	4	5

Section C: Your future plans and aspirations

C1. What is the highest level of education you are aiming to achieve?	
1.	I don't know; I haven't thought about it.
2.	I completed primary school (4 grades) and don't know if I will also complete the lower secondary (8 grades).
3.	To complete 8 grades and leave education after that.
4.	To complete 10 grades without a qualification certificate.
5.	To complete high school (12 grades) even if I don't manage to get a Baccalaureate diploma.
6.	To complete a vocational school or dual education with a qualification diploma, and maybe get a job.
7.	To complete high school (12 grades) with the Baccalaureate diploma.

- 8. To continue my education with a post-secondary or foreman school.
- 9. To continue my education and get a Bachelor degree, maybe even a Master degree and a PhD.

- C2. Are your peers (friend of the same age) having the same plans for future education?**
- 1. I don't know; I haven't thought about it.
 - 2. Yes, they have the same plans
 - 3. No, they want to achieve higher level of education compared to me
 - 4. No, they already left school

1.2. SASAT Data Scoring

Observation: If a student skipped a question or circled two or more values for an item, that item shall be deemed as unanswered.

How the data can be analyzed: The analysis is conducted at question level (A1, A2, etc.) and section level (A, B or C). Part I of the document includes lists of potential prevention measures to be taken at school level to increase the quality of education and improve school climate.

Section A: You and your family

(A1) Parental and socio-emotional support	<p>Calculate the A1 score = sum of the 5 items in the table, and for each value we get a value ranging between 5 (minimum) and 25 (maximum). Then, at school level (grades 5, 6, etc.)/per school calculate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Percentage of students with an A1 score < 15 - Avg Score_A1 = Score_A1 aggregated for all students/total number of students <p><i>The need for intervention is higher if questions A2 and A4 indicate a low level of family support.</i></p>
(A2) Parental support for education	<p>Calculate the A2 score = sum of the 6 items in the table, and for each value we get a value ranging between 6 (minimum) and 30 (maximum). Then, at school level (grades 5, 6, etc.)/per school calculate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Percentage of students with an A2 score < 18 - Avg Score_A2 = Score_A2 aggregated for all students/total number of students <p><i>The need for intervention is higher if questions A1 and A4 indicate a low level of family support.</i></p>
(A4) Parents' expectations regarding students' education	<p>At school level (grades 5, 6, etc.)/per school calculate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the share of students that circled 1 or 2 <p><i>The need for intervention is higher if questions A1 and A2 indicate a low level of family support.</i></p>

Section B: At school

(B1) Students' feeling of school belonging	<p>Calculate the B1 score = sum of the 3 items in the table, and for each value we get a value ranging between 3 (minimum) and 15 (maximum). Then, at school level (grades 5, 6, etc.)/per school calculate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Percentage of students with a B1 score < 9 - Avg Score_B1 = Score_B1 aggregated for all students/total number of students <p><i>The need for intervention is higher if questions B2 and B4 indicate a low level of school belonging.</i></p>
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(B2) Importance given by the students to education	<p>Calculate the B2 score = sum of the 3 items in the table, and for each value we get a value ranging between 3 (minimum) and 15 (maximum). Then, at school level (grades 5, 6, etc.)/per school calculate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Percentage of students with a B2 score < 9 - Avg Score_B2 = Score_B2 aggregated for all students/total number of students <p><i>The need for intervention is higher if questions B1 and B4 indicate a low level of school belonging.</i></p>
(B4) Social-emotional support provided by teachers	<p>Calculate the B4 score = sum of the 5 items in the table, and for each value we get a value ranging between 5 (minimum) and 25 (maximum). Then, at school level (grades 5, 6, etc.)/per school calculate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Percentage of students with an B4 score < 15 - Avg Score_B4 = Score_B4 aggregated for all students/total number of students <p><i>The need for intervention is higher if questions B1 and B2 indicate a low level of school belonging.</i></p>
(B5) Learning environment in classroom	<p>Calculate the B5 score = sum of the 3 items in the table, and for each value we get a value ranging between 3 (minimum) and 15 (maximum). Then, at school level (grades 5, 6, etc.)/per school calculate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Percentage of students with a B5 score > 9 - Avg Score_B5 = Score_B5 aggregated for all students/total number of students <p><i>The higher the scores received by the indicators (exceeding 9), the bigger the problem of classroom discipline, and the interventions should be firmer.</i></p>
(B6) Student violence	<p>Calculate the B6 score = sum of the 4 items in the table, and for each value we get a value ranging between 4 (minimum) and 20 (maximum). Then, at school level (grades 5, 6, etc.)/per school calculate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Percentage of students with a B6 score > 5 - Avg Score_B6 = Score_B6 aggregated for all students/total number of students <p><i>The higher the scores received by the indicators (exceeding 5), the bigger the problem of school violence, and the interventions should be firmer.</i></p>

Section C: Your future plans and aspirations

(C1) Students' educational aspirations	<p>At school level (grades 5, 6, etc.)/per school calculate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the share of students that circled 3
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1.3. Report Template for SASAT

It is recommended to prepare such reports twice a year, before organizing the SASAT.ro rounds, at the beginning of each school semester.

- County/ Locality (TAU)
- School (name & identification code)
- Reference period: from month...year...to month...year...

Each report covers a six-month period. The reference period starts before organizing a SASAT.ro round and covers 6 months in which the ESL-prevention measures agreed upon are implemented, and ends before organizing the following SASAT.ro round.

- The date when a new SASAT.ro round will be organized in school (day/month/year).

SASAT.ro round and ESL-prevention measures agreed during the reference period						
The date when the SASAT.ro round from the reference period was organized in school (day/month/year).						
In your school, how many SASAT.ro rounds have there been implemented so far?						
	Share of students below the threshold by grades/school					ESL-prevention actions agreed for the class/school
	V	VI	VII	VIII	School	
Section A: You and your family						
Low family support (A1 & A2)						...
Low parents' expectations regarding students' education (A4)						...
Section B: At school						
Low sense of attachment to school or low appreciation of education (B1 & B2)						...
Low teachers support (B3)						...
Poor learning environment in classroom or student violence (B5 & B6)						...
Section C: Your future plans and aspirations						
Low aspirations of students regarding education (intention to ESL) (C1)						...

To calculate the indicators, see Annex 1.1.

The ESL-prevention actions agreed at school level shall be briefly presented, mentioning if they will be delivered at school level or only in specific classes (namely...).

Evolution of the warning signals during the reference period

Progress of **aggregate data** (at classroom and school level) for monitoring the warning signals during the reference period: absences, school performance, behaviors.

ESL-prevention measures implemented during the reference period and their results

Has the school implemented measures aimed at increasing the quality of teaching/ learning and improving the school environment, for the purpose of preventing school dropout and ESL? Yes No

If YES

Briefly describe the prevention activities undertaken during the reference period, with information about the date, place, participation, responsible person and any other relevant information. If some of the agreed prevention activities have not been carried out or have been interrupted, the reason shall be explained. The impact of the undertaken activities shall be estimated and explained.

Progress of the SASAT.ro indicators over time

- Show the progress for each of the 6 indicators above (from sections A, B, and C), computed at aggregate level for **all students in the school**, from the first round of SASAT.ro ever organized in the school until the round in the reference period. The data shall be presented in a table/ graph.
- Show the progress for each of the 6 indicators above (from sections A, B, and C), computed at aggregate level for **all students in the 5th grade**, from the first round of SASAT.ro ever organized in the school until the round in the reference period. The data shall be presented in a table/graph.
- Similar for students in 6th, 7th grades, etc.

The data above shall be briefly interpreted.

Date School Principal (name/ signature)

2. EWM Tools for Intervention Component

2.1. EWM Observation Sheet to Identify Students at Risk of ESL or Dropout

Attention! Before filling in the EWM Observation Sheet it is recommended that the school organizes 1-2 teacher meetings, together with the school counselor, the school mediator and other specialists working with that school, during which they exchange information, observations and recommendations on absenteeism, school performance and inappropriate student behaviors. Afterwards, class masters responsible with filling in the Observation Sheet should discuss and analyze problematic cases within the classroom council and with the school principal.

At-risk indicators		
School (name & identification code):		
Student's name and surname:		
Student's Personal Identification Number:		
Grade the student is in:		
Has the student been identified and recorded on the "Students in process of dropping out" list?	Yes	No
<i>ONLY FOR STUDENTS ATTENDING SCHOOL (and not on the "Students in process of dropping out" list)</i>		
1. The student has low school attendance	Yes	No
2. The student has poor school performance	Yes	No
3. The student has repeated one year	Yes	No
4. The student has repeated at least two years	Yes	No
5. The student has a history of school sanctions (expulsion, reprimand, transfer for disciplinary reasons, low conduct grade) or complaints made by other students and/or parents and/or teachers for violence, bullying, theft, destruction of goods, etc.	Yes	No
Conclusion of the EWM Observation Sheet		
-The student is:	1. At risk of dropout or ESL	0. At no risk
<input type="checkbox"/> If all 5 indicators in the EWM Observation Sheet have "No" = Student is not at risk of dropout or ESL		
<input type="checkbox"/> If at least one of the 5 indicators in the EWM Observation Sheet has "Yes" = Student at risk of dropout or ESL		
ONLY FOR STUDENTS AT RISK		
Evaluation planning:		
The case is assessed by the school, based on the EWM Assessment Sheet.		
Data of who filled out the EWM Observation Sheet:		
- Name and surname of the person who filled out the sheet		
- Position of the person who filled out the sheet		
- Date when the sheet was filled out ¹		
Observation: <i>The sheet should be introduced into the "School Observatory".</i>		

¹ The sheet should be updated in 12 months, if there are no special circumstances.

2.2. School Observatory Report Template

The School Observatory should be created, stored and kept at school level.

An Excel table in which each row records students (organized by education levels) and each column records the EWM indicators:

County:		
Commune/town/municipality (TAU):		
School (name & identification code):		
Student's unique identification number assigned in the "School Observatory":		
Student's name and surname:		
Student's Personal Identification Number:		
Student's gender: 1. M 2. F Student's age (years turned):		
Type of education attended: 1. Daily classes; 2. Reduced frequency; 3. Second Chance		
Grade the student is in:		
Has the student been identified and recorded in the list of <i>Students in process of dropping out</i> ?		Yes No
<i>ONLY FOR STUDENTS ATTENDING SCHOOL (and not Students in process of dropping out included in the list)</i>		
Data in the EWM Observation Sheet (see Annex 2.1):		
- Identification data of the household (name of mother, father, or legal guardian, address)		
- Data of who filled out the EWM Observation Sheet (name, position, and date) ²		
The 5 risk indicators in the EWM Observation Sheet:		
1. The student has low school attendance	Yes	No
2. The student has poor school performance	Yes	No
3. The student has repeated one year	Yes	No
4. The student has repeated at least two years	Yes	No
5. The student has a history of school sanctions (expulsion, reprimand, transfer for disciplinary reasons, low conduct grade) or complaints made by other students and/or parents and/or teachers for violence, bullying, theft, destruction of goods, etc.	Yes	No
Conclusion of the EWM Observation Sheet		
-The student is:		1. At risk of dropout or ESL 0. At no risk
Evaluation planning:		
Should the case be referred to SPAS to fill in the Risks Identification Sheet?		Yes No
<i>If at least one of the indicators in the indicators in the EWM Observation Sheet is ticked "Yes", then the school should refer the case to SPAS, which should fill in the Risks Identification Sheet through home visits, in order to thoroughly document the risk situations the child is exposed to and develop the education services plan.</i>		
If Yes, the case is referred to SPAS		
- The date when the school refers the case to SPAS for assessment		
<i>The home visit aiming to fill out the Risks Identification Sheet should be scheduled by SPAS within 72 hours from the completion or receipt of the Observation Sheet.</i> ³		
If No, the case is assessed by the school, based on the EWM Assessment Sheet:		
- Data of who filled out the EWM Assessment Sheet (name, position, and date)		

² The sheet should be updated in 12 months, if there are no special circumstances.

³ GD 691/2015 Art. 8.

2.3. Template for EWM Assessment Sheet for (GT1) Students at Risk

The evaluation should cover all children attending school (who are not on the “Students in process of dropping out” list) who have been recorded as “Students at risk of dropout or ESL” in the “School Observatory”.

County:
Commune/town/municipality (TAU):
School (name & identification code):
Student’s unique identification number assigned in the “School Observatory”:
Student’s name and surname:
Student’s Personal Identification Number:
Student’s gender: 1. M 2. F Student’s age (years turned):
Type of education attended: 1. Daily classes; 2. Reduced frequency; 3. Second Chance
Grade the student is in:

Who and when conducted the home visit or the face-to-face meeting to fill out the sheet:
Person(s):
Visit date:
Where is the student living:
Address:
In the same locality with the school? Yes No
In the household with the student live: Total number of people:
of which adults (18+): and children (0-17 years):
Number of student’s younger siblings:
The mother is in the household: Yes No
Last level of education completed by the mother: 1. No education; 2. Primary; 3 Lower secondary; 4 High-school; 5. Vocational school; 6. Post-secondary school; 7 Higher education
The father is in the household: Yes No
Last level of education completed by the father: 1. No education; 2. Primary; 3 Lower secondary; 4 High-school; 5. Vocational school; 6. Post-secondary school; 7 Higher education
Number of rooms (housing spaces) in the house:

From the list below please tick those factors you consider specific to the student for whom you are filling out this sheet. You can tick one or several factors from the same category.

Diagnosis of causes/ risk factors
(A) Causes/ risk factors related to family support
1. Family cannot afford the school-related costs (clothes, footwear, school supplies, commuting, etc.) because it is in poverty or has very low income. Yes No
2. Underage mother or parents, single-parent, reorganized family (the parent looking after the child remarried), family with 3 or more children Yes No
3. One or both parents are not at home, being away or abroad for work Yes No
4. One or both parents are not at home, being sentenced to prison Yes No
5. One or both parents are not at home, because they left their home (divorce, death or other situations*) Yes No

Diagnosis of causes/ risk factors		
6. One or more children separated from the family or reinserted into the family (after being in special protection)	Yes	No
7. Adults or children in the household have disabilities** or severe chronic illness that significantly limit their day-to-day activities and social life participation	Yes	No
8. Parents, single parent or caretaker in the household have at most primary education	Yes	No
9. Parents, single parent or caretaker in the household do not put emphasis on school/children's education or have a negative attitude towards it	Yes	No
10. The student has one or several siblings (6-17 years old) who have never been to school, abandoned or are early school leavers	Yes	No
11. The student has siblings in school who are on the GT1 list	Yes	No
12. The family has a history of complaints/ notifications registered with and confirmed by the local public administration authorities or the police, concerning the antisocial behavior of a family member, such as criminal acts, using minors for begging, prostitution, etc.	Yes	No
13. Existence of risky behaviors in the family: domestic violence, alcohol or substance abuse, child abuse or neglect	Yes	No
14. The family has no home and lives on the street or are temporary squatters	Yes	No
15. The family lives in improvised dwelling, in spaces that are not intended for this purpose - warehouses, water towers, sewage facilities, buildings in advance degradation, caves, huts, etc.	Yes	No
16. The family has a home, but there are no basic conditions for studying at home	Yes	No
17. None of the above.	Yes	No
There are other causes, namely:		
<hr/>		
(B) Risk factors related to child's situation		
1. The student has disabilities (with disability certificate) or SEN (with school orientation certificate)***	Yes	No
2. The student has learning difficulties, without a disability/ school orientation certificate, for instance he has had poor learning outcomes over the years	Yes	No
3. In the last year, the student has been away from the country or the locality once or several times, for more than 3 months, beyond the school break.	Yes	No
4. The student is in the special protection system (in an institution or in placement with a foster parent, relatives or another family)	Yes	No
5. The student stays with a landlord or in a boarding school	Yes	No
6. The student is part of a gang/group of friends who are not attending school or have dropped out	Yes	No
7. The student is married, pregnant or gave birth to a child	Yes	No
8. The student is kept at home to take after the younger siblings or is set to work (formal or informal work, paid or unpaid)	Yes	No
9. The student has no interest or aspirations related to education	Yes	No
10. None of the above.	Yes	No
There are other causes, namely:		
<hr/>		

Diagnosis of causes/ risk factors		
(C) Causes/ risk factors related to school environment		
1. Discrimination or isolation at school	Yes	No
2. School violence	Yes	No
3. None of the above.	Yes	No
There are other causes, namely: _____		
(D) Causes/ risk factors related to community		
1. The student lives in a marginalized area or source community for the child care system	Yes	No
2. The student lives in a village/ area from where it is difficult or sometimes impossible to commute to school	Yes	No
3. None of the above.	Yes	No
There are other causes, namely: _____		

Sources: Risks identification sheet (GD 691/2015) UNICEF (2012) and Van Cappelle and Bell (2016).

Note: *Unknown parents, deceased from their parental rights, or have received a criminal penalty prohibiting their parental rights, have been placed under judicial control, disappeared or declared dead in court
 Sensorial, neurological or intellectual disabilities *The disability and the school orientation certificates for children are to be renewed yearly. Therefore, the indicator considers the existence of such certificate in any year of the educational level attended by the student at the time of completing the sheet.

2.4. Template for Register of Students at Risk of ESL

This Register should be created, stored and maintained at school level.

The Register records all students attending school (who are not on the “Students in process of dropping out” list) who have been recorded as “students at risk of dropout or ESL” in the “School Observatory”.

An Excel table in which each row records students (organized by education levels) and each column records:

County:		
Commune/town/municipality (TAU):		
School (name & identification code):		
Student’s unique identification number assigned in the “School Observatory”:		
Student’s name and surname:		
Student’s Personal Identification Number:		
Student’s gender: 1. M 2. F Student’s age (years turned):		
Type of education attended: 1. Daily classes; 2. Reduced frequency; 3. Second Chance		
Grade the student is in:		
Data in the EWM Observation Sheet (see Annex 2.1):		
- Identification data of the household (name of mother, father or legal guardian, address)		
- Data on who filled out the EWM Observation Sheet (name, position, and date) ⁴		
The 5 risk indicators in the EWM Observation Sheet:		
1. The student has low school attendance	Yes	No
2. The student has poor school performance	Yes	No
3. The student has repeated one year	Yes	No
4. The student has repeated at least two years	Yes	No
5. The student has a history of school sanctions (expulsion, reprimand, transfer for disciplinary reasons, low conduct grade) or complaints made by other students and/ or parents and/ or teachers for violence, bullying, theft, destruction of goods, etc.	Yes	No
Data on the assessment:		
Was the assessment conducted by the school, based on the EWM Assessment Sheet (Annex 2.5)?	Yes	No
If YES, assessment results:		
Risk indicators in the EWM Assessment Sheet (see Annex 2.3):		
(A) Causes/ risk factors related to family support		
(B) Risk factors related to child’s situation		
(C) Causes/ risk factors related to school environment		
(D) Causes/ risk factors related to community		
Prevention case manager appointed by the School:		
- Prevention case manager’s name		
- Prevention case manager’s position		
<i>The case manager should prepare the Education Services Plan that will be discussed, agreed and signed by student’s family within 30 days from the assessment.</i>		
Education Services Plan for Level 2 Interventions:		
Services and benefits that should be offered to the student:		
(A) Necessary educational services		
(B) Necessary specialists		
(C) Necessary benefits		

⁴ The sheet should be updated in 12 months, if there are no special circumstances.

(D) Ensure participation of the student or parents/ caretaker in the ESL-prevention measures organized at school level
Reviewed Education Services Plan for Level 3 Interventions:
Services and benefits that should be offered to the student:
(A) Necessary educational services
(B) Necessary specialists
(C) Necessary benefits
(D) Ensure participation of the student or parents/ caretaker in the ESL-prevention measures organized at school level

<i>Data in the EWM Progress Report:</i>
- Monthly monitoring the interventions carried out (should be done by the prevention case manager, under the supervision of the school principal)
Services and benefits offered to the child:
(A) Necessary educational services
(B) Necessary specialists
(C) Necessary benefits
(D) Ensure participation of the student or parents/ caretaker in the ESL-prevention measures organized at school level
- Monthly monitoring the risk indicators based on which the student was identified as being at risk (should be done by the prevention case manager, together with the other teachers, under the supervision of the school principal)
<i>Conclusions of the Monitoring and Next steps</i>
Data in the Register:
- Date of student registration
- Data on who made the registration (name, position)

2.5. Education Services Plan for (GT1) Students at Risk of Dropout or ESL

This document is:

(Select the corresponding answer)

|_1_| Education Services Plan for Level 2 Interventions

|_2_| Reviewed Education Services Plan for Level 3 Interventions

The recommendations in the Education Services Plan prepared at school level and agreed with the parents and the student

The plan covers the types of services and benefits that the student should receive, who is offering the services and for how long. The services plan shall be approved by decision of the School Principal.

County:
Commune/town/municipality (TAU):
School (name & identification code):
Student's unique identification number assigned in the "School Observatory":
Student's name and surname:
Student's Personal Identification Number:
Student's gender: 1. M 2. F Student's age (years turned):
Type of education attended: 1. Daily classes; 2. Reduced frequency; 3. Second Chance
Grade the student is in:
Who is attending the meeting on behalf of the student?
Mother (name and surname):
Father (name and surname):
Caretaker/legal guardian (name and surname):
- Date when the case was registered in the <i>Register of students at risk of ESL</i> dedicated to GT1
- Name of Prevention Case Manager in school
- Position of Prevention Case Manager in school
- Date when the Educational Services Plan was agreed and signed by school and parents
- Date when the Educational Services Plan started to be implemented

Introduction

The Education Services Plan is prepared by specialists taking into consideration:

- the risk indicators recorded in the EWM Observation Sheet (...*remind the problem*)
- the causes and risk factors identified in the EWM Assessment Sheet filled out during the home visit on (...*remind the date*)

Meeting goals

To discuss about and jointly agree on the most appropriate measures to support the student (...*student's name*).

The Education Services Plan shall be considered final only after the student (...*student's name*) and yourself agree with the proposed measures.

You can refuse the measures you disagree with and propose any other measures and actions you think might be more effective for the student (...*student's name*) needs.

A)	Educational services ⁵ the student needs	Yes/ No		If YES, who is providing the services**	Accommodation period
1.	School counseling and guidance	Yes	No		

⁵ Educational services used by ANPDCA, according to the World Bank (April 2018), Output #4.

2.	Counseling and professional/vocational guidance	Yes	No		
3.	Educational support services, namely...	Yes	No		
4.	School after school services	Yes	No		
5.	Second Chance	Yes	No		
6.	Sports club activities, football and other	Yes	No		
7.	Children's Club activities	Yes	No		
8.	Counseling services for parents	Yes	No		
9.	Parental education or Parents' school	Yes	No		
10.	Other actions and services, namely...*	Yes	No		

*Examples of other actions and services: Differentiated work tasks, tutoring classes organized in school outside the regular program, special classes and extra hours with teachers specialized in special education, remedial classes during the summer holiday, extra work at home and homework. Parents could benefit from a *Guideline for homework*, to create an appropriate, home study environment and develop homework autonomy.

**Could also be filled out as "Unidentified".

B)	Specialists the student needs	Yes/ No	
1.	Itinerant and support teacher	Yes	No
2.	Speech therapist/ teacher	Yes	No
3.	Teacher for children with special needs (other than speech therapist)	Yes	No
4.	School mediator	Yes	No
5.	Other specialists, namely...	Yes	No

C)	Benefits the student needs	Yes/ No		<i>If YES, who is providing the benefits</i>	Accommodation period
1.	School supplies	Yes	No		
2.	Scholarship	Yes	No		
3.	Free transportation to and from school	Yes	No		
4.	Other benefits, namely...	Yes	No		

D) Ensure participation of the student or parents/ caretaker in the ESL-prevention measures organized at the school level (other than those already mentioned)

ESL-prevention measures available in school, that should be attended by ...	Student		Parents/ caretaker	
1. ...	Yes	No	Yes	No
2. ...	Yes	No	Yes	No
3. ...	Yes	No	Yes	No

Date when the Education Services Plan was agreed and signed by the school and parents.

Attached to this Education Services Plan is a Commitment for Remediation, that shall be discussed and signed next.

Principal
(Name and surname/ signature)

Prevention Case Manager

Student's Parents/ caretaker

2.6. Template for Commitment for Remediation for (GT1) Students at Risk of Dropout or ESL

This document is the Commitment for remediation attached to:

(Select the corresponding answer)

|_1_| Education Services Plan for Level 2 Interventions

|_2_| Reviewed Education Services Plan for Level 3 Interventions

I. Parties

1. School....., registered in (street)....., no....., locality....., county....., represented by the classroom master/ primary teacher in their capacity of prevention case managers and

2. Student's parent/legal guardian, Mr/Mrs....., residing in (street)..... no....., locality....., county....., phone....., in their capacity of student's....., in grade

II. Objectives of the agreement

- Reducing absences
- Improving school performance
- Reducing repetition and dropout
- Solving learning difficulties
- Improving student's behavior

III. Responsibilities of the prevention case manager (classroom master/ primary teacher)

- monitor the implementation of prevention and support measures, as well as of the remedial activities
- ensure the space, organizational and logistical framework to carry out the activities hereunder
- monitor student's progress and meeting the objectives in the individualized Educational Services Plan
-

IV. Responsibilities of the school principal, school counselor and/or other specialists

- ensure that all services and specialists provided in the individualized Educational Services Plan are available in the school
- monitor the interventions and supervise the prevention case manager
- ensure an optimal organizational and logistical framework to carry out the activities

V. Parent's/ legal guardian's responsibilities

- come to school to discuss with teachers about involvement in child's activity, progress and behavior
- collaborate with teachers and other specialists to best decide how to reach the proposed objectives
- provide the child, as possible, the necessary support (material, space, etc.) for school activity
- participate to counseling sessions
-

VI. Student's responsibilities

- actively participate in the activities jointly agreed in the individualized Educational Services Plan
-

VII. Duration of the agreement

This Agreement is concluded for a period of 3 consecutive months, from..... to

Afterwards an interim review takes place; next steps shall be set based on its results.

Signed today,, in X copies, in original, for each party.

Prevention Case Manager

School Principal

Parent/ legal guardian

Student

(Name and surname/ signature)

2.7. Template for Confidentiality Agreement for the Prevention Case Manager

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT⁶

The undersigned, _____
(Name, surname)
Position _____
institution _____

In my capacity as prevention case manager I hereby confirm that:

- I will keep the confidentiality of the personal information about the child and his family, to which I have access in the evaluation process, meetings in which personal details are described, and direct intervention;
- I will ensure that third parties irrelevant for the case have limited access to the documents I prepare or receive under the evaluation and intervention.

At the same time, if I consider that confidential information should be shared, I will ensure that:

- The specialist or institution to whom/which the information is transmitted is relevant for the problem and the case;
- The child, depending on his age and capacity to understand, as well as his legal guardian allow for the case to be discussed with or information to be sent to case-relevant specialists;
- I will send confidential information without the consent of the child and legal guardian only if I consider that the situation affects child's health and development.

Date: _____

(Name and surname/signature)

⁶ Adapted after Dnestrean et al. (2016: 65).

2.8. Template for EWM Progress Report for (GT1) Students at Risk of Dropout or ESL

This document is the Progress Report attached to:

(Select the corresponding answer)

|_1_| Education Services Plan for Level 2 Interventions

|_2_| Reviewed Education Services Plan for Level 3 Interventions

County:
Commune/town/municipality (TAU):
School (name & identification code):
Student's unique identification number assigned in the "School Observatory":
Student's name and surname:
Student's Personal Identification Number:
Student's gender: 1. M 2. F Student's age (years turned):
Type of education attended: 1. Daily classes; 2. Reduced frequency; 3. Second Chance
Grade the student is in:
- Date when the case was registered in the <i>Register of students at risk of ESL</i> dedicated to GT1
- Name of Prevention Case Manager in school
- Position of Prevention Case Manager in school
- Date when the Educational Services Plan was agreed and signed by school and parents
- Date when the Educational Services Plan started to be implemented

Monthly monitoring the interventions carried out

The monitoring should be done by the prevention case manager, under the supervision of the school principal.

A)	Educational services provided for the child or parents	Included in the Services Plan Yes/No	Service was provided on month (M)... Yes/No					
			M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6
1.	School counseling and guidance							
2.	Counseling and professional/vocational guidance							
3.	Educational support services, namely...							
4.	School after school services							
5.	Second Chance							
6.	Sports club activities, football and other							
7.	Children's Club activities							
8.	Counseling services for parents							
9.	Parental education or Parents' school							
10.	Other actions and services, namely...*							

*Examples of other actions and services: Differentiated work tasks, tutoring classes organized in school outside the regular program, special classes and extra hours with teachers specialized in special education, remedial classes during the summer holiday, extra work at home and homework. Parents could benefit from a *Guideline for homework*, to create an appropriate, home study environment and develop homework autonomy.

B)	The student received support from...	Included in the Services Plan Yes/No	Service was provided on month (M)... Yes/No					
			M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6
1.	Itinerant and support teacher							
2.	Speech therapist/teacher							
3.	Teacher for children with special needs (other than speech therapist)							
4.	School mediator							
5.	Other specialists, namely...							

C)	Benefits received by the student	Included in the Services plan Yes/No	The benefit was provided on month (M)... Yes/No					
			M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6
1.	School supplies							
2.	Scholarship							
3.	Free transportation to and from school							
4.	Other benefits, namely...							

D)	Other actions or measures received by the student, which are not covered in the above tables (Clearly write down the actions)	Included in the Services Plan Yes/No	The action was carried out on month (M)... Yes/No					
			M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6
1.								
2.								
3.								
4.								
5.								

Monthly monitoring the risk indicators based on which the student was identified as being at-risk
The monitoring should be done by the case manager, together with the other teachers, under the supervision of the school principal.

E)	Risk indicators evolution (Indicators used to identify at-risk students in the EWM Observation Sheet) Fill out all lines for the indicator(s) based on which the student was identified as being at-risk	Indicator seen at identification Yes/No	If YES Situation in ... Month (M)					
			M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6
1	Total number of absences (motivated and unexcused) of the student in that month							
2	Number of unexcused absences in that month							

E)	Risk indicators evolution (Indicators used to identify at-risk students in the EWM Observation Sheet) Fill out all lines for the indicator(s) based on which the student was identified as being at-risk	Indicator seen at identification Yes/No	If YES Situation in ... Month (M)					
			M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6
3	Does the math teacher assess that student's performance improved in that month? (Yes/No) If you do not get the math teacher's evaluation, leave the cell blank							
4	Does the mother tongue teacher assess that student's performance improved in that month? (Yes/No) If you do not get the mother tongue teacher's evaluation not giving, leave the cell blank							
5	Were there any incidents or complaints registered by teachers, colleagues or parents about student's behavior in school? (Yes/No)							

Conclusions of the monitoring and Next steps

If the student is at Level 2 Intervention:

After the first 3 months of progress monitoring (M1, M2, M3), the assessment shows that:

(Select the corresponding answer)

|_1_| There is not a positive evolution on all risk indicators based on which the student was identified as being at risk

=> Fill out the date when you sent an invitation to the parents to approve and sign the Reviewed Education Services Plan => GO to Level 3

|_2_| There is a positive evolution on all risk indicators based on which the student was identified as being at risk

=> Continue the monitoring for another 3 months (M4, M5, M6) on this sheet.

If in any of the months M4, M5 or M6 the positive evolution stops:

=> Write down the risk indicator(s) for which the positive evolution has stopped.

If the positive evolution remains during the 3 additional months of monitoring (M4, M5 and M6):

=> Fill out the date when you sent an invitation to the parents to approve and sign the Reviewed Education Services Plan => GO to Level 3

=> Fill out the date when you recorded SUCCESS in the Register of students at risk of ESL

As of this date the student is no longer considered at risk and becomes an inactive case in the Register => STOP intervention

If the student is at Level 3 Intervention:

After the first 3 months of progress monitoring (M1, M2, M3), the assessment shows that:

(Select the corresponding answer)

|_1_| There is not a positive evolution on all risk indicators based on which the student was identified as being at risk

=> Fill out the date when you referred the case to SPAS => GO to Level 4

The Specialist ... *(Name and surname, position)*, was appointed by principal's decision... *(Registration no.)* from ... *(Date)* to be part of the community intervention team coordinated by SPAS, which provides the Level 4 intervention.

|_2_| There is a positive evolution on all risk indicators based on which the student was identified as being at risk

=> *Continue the monitoring for another 3 months (M4, M5, M6) on this sheet.*

=> Write down the risk indicator(s) for which the positive evolution has stopped.

If in any of M4, M5 or M6 the positive evolution stops:

=> Fill out the date when you referred the case to SPAS => GO to Level 4

The Specialist ... *(Name and surname, position)*, was appointed by principal's decision... *(Registration no.)* from ... *(Date)* to be part of the community intervention team coordinated by SPAS, which provides the Level 4 intervention.

If the positive evolution remains during the 3 additional months of monitoring (M4, M5 and M6):

=> Fill out the date when you recorded SUCCESS in the Register of students at risk of ESL

As of this date the student is no longer considered as being at risk and becomes an inactive case in the Register => STOP intervention

Prevention Case manager
(Name and surname/ signature)

School principal

3. EWM Tool for Compensation Component

3.1. EWM Sheet for Out-of-School Children and Youth Identification (GT2 & GT3 & GT4 & Migrant children)

Attention! Apart from this sheet, write down in a table all households visited where you haven't found any out-of-school child or youth and, consequently, for which you haven't filled out a distinct sheet.

In the household there are:

Section A: One or several children (6-17 years old) living in the household* who have never been enrolled in school?	Yes	No
---	-----	----

If YES, draw a list of all the children who form the GT2 in the community.

Attention! *They live in the household, although temporarily are away for a short period, for instance in the hospital, on holiday, visiting relatives, etc. The following shall not be considered as living in the household: children who have been working abroad for more than 3 months in the last 12 months, children registered in the special protection system, children who moved or are being taken care of by people in another locality.

Carefully write down the CNP (personal identification code) (because based on it one can tell a person's gender and age). If they don't have any identification documents, write zero. The "Mother tongue" column shall be filled out only if it is other than Romanian.

No	Name and surname	CNP	Mother tongue
1.			
2.			
3.	...		

Section B: One or several children (6-17 years old) living in the household* who were enrolled in school, but who dropped-out or left school before completing compulsory education (10 grades)?	Yes	No
---	-----	----

If YES, draw a list of all the children who form the GT3 in the community.

Attention! *They live in the household, although temporarily are away for a short period, for instance in the hospital, on holiday, visiting relatives, etc. The following shall not be considered as living in the household: children who have been working abroad for more than 3 months in the last 12 months, children registered in the special protection system, children who moved or are being taken care of by people in another locality.

Carefully write down the CNP (personal identification code) (because based on it one can tell a person's gender and age). If they don't have any identification documents, write zero. The "Mother tongue" column shall be filled out only if it is other than Romanian.

No	Name and surname	CNP	Mother tongue
1.			
2.			
3.	...		

Section C: One or several children (6-17 years old) who, in the past 12 months, have been absent from school because have been abroad for more than 3 months, beyond the summer break?	Yes	No
---	-----	----

If YES, draw a list of all the children who form the Migrant children group in the community.
 If the entire family is abroad, try to get information from grandparents or other relatives, friends or neighbors. If they can't answer instantly, fill out the child's/youth's name and age and ask them to get the answers next time they talk on the phone or by email with those abroad and to give you the data.

No 1	a. Name and surname:			
	b. Gender:	1. M	2. F	c. Age (years turned):
	d. In which country is the child living?			
	e. Is the child attending school there?	1. Yes	2. No	If YES f. In what grade?

No 2	a. Name and surname			
	b. Gender:	1. M	2. F	c. Age (years turned):
	d. In which country is the child living?			
	e. Is the child attending school there?	1. Yes	2. No	If YES f. In what grade?

...

Observation:

SPAS will add section D with the data below in the Register for reenrollment in ET at community level, which shall be drafted by the school.

Attention! Children in this section could also include children identified in Section C, Migrant children, or children identified in Section B, GT3 children. Do not record them also here, as this would be a double entry.

Section D: Students in process of dropping out

Carefully write down the CNP (personal identification code) (because based on it one can tell a person's gender and age). If they don't have any identification documents, write zero. The "Mother tongue" column shall be filled out only if it is other than Romanian.

No	Name and surname	CNP	Mother tongue
1.			
2.			
3.	...		

Section E: One or several youths (18-24 years old) who have not completed more than 8 grades and who simultaneously meet these four conditions:

- | | | |
|---|-----|----|
| (i) Live in the household*. | Yes | No |
| (ii) Are not in education or training. | | |
| (iii) Don't have a job. | | |
| (iv) Are not attending an apprenticeship or internship. | | |
-

If YES, draw a list of all these children and youths who form the GT4 in the community.

Attention! *They live in the household, although temporarily are away for a short period, for instance in the hospital, on holiday, visiting relatives, etc. The following shall not be considered as living in the household: youths who have been working abroad for more than 3 months in the last 12 months, youths in penitentiaries, youths in hospital/nursing homes/health centers for more than 3 months, youths relocated to another address in the locality or elsewhere.

Carefully write down the CNP (personal identification code) (because based on it one can tell a person's gender and age). If they don't have any identification documents, write zero. The "Mother tongue" column shall be filled out only if it is other than Romanian.

No	Name and surname	CNP	Grades completed	Mother tongue
1.				
2.				
3.	...			

The information below shall be filled out only in the household there is at least one child or youth out of the education and training system.

Household identification data:

County: TAU: Village:

Address:

If the household doesn't have a house or lives in an improvised one or lives here and there, write down "None".

Name and surname of the household head:

Data on the EWM Quick Census:

- Name and surname of the person who filled out the EWM Identification Sheet
- Position of the person who filled out the sheet EWM Identification Sheet
- Date when the EWM Identification Sheet was filled out for the household
- Date when the EWM Identification Sheet was delivered to SPAS

Sheet delivery signature
(Person who filled out the sheet)

Sheet receipt signature
(SPAS)

3.2. Template for Register for Reenrollment in ET at the Community Level

This Register should be created, stored and maintained by SPAS, which is responsible to aggregate all sheets that have been filled out for all households in the community.

SPAS submits the data from the Register to the school (which inputs it in SIIR), Section D to AJOFM (County Employment Agency), ANC and, if any, to centers involved in the Youth Guarantee Program.

Excel table in which each row records children (6-17 years old) and youths (18-24 years old) in the community identified through the EWM Quick Census, and each column records:

Unique identification number:
Child's name and surname:
The group the child/ youth belongs to:

Select A, B, C, D (list received from school) or E, according to the section filled out.

Section A:	GT2 - School-age children (6-17 years old) who have never been enrolled in school
Section B:	GT3 - School-age children (6-17 years old) who dropped-out or are early-school leavers
Section C:	Migrant children - Children (6-17 years old) who, in the past 12 months, have been absent from school because have been abroad for more than 3 months, beyond the summer break
Section D:	Students in process of dropping out - Children recorded in the school documents, who neither attending school nor have been recorded as having dropped-out <i>List produced by the school and sent to SPAS. Be aware of the double entry between Sections D and B, as well as between D and C.</i>
Section E:	GT4 - Youths of 18-24 years, who have not completed more than 8 grades and who are not in education or training.

If the child appears in Section A (GT2) or B (GT3) or D, fill out:			
- CNP			
- Mother tongue			
If the child appears in Section C (Migrant children), fill out:			
- Gender:	1. M	2. F	
- Age (years turned):			
- In which country is the child living?			
- Is the child attending school there?		Yes	No
- If YES, in what grade?			
If the youth appears in Section E, fill out:			
- CNP			
- Number of grades completed			
- Mother tongue			

Data on the EWM Quick Census:	
- Name and surname of the person who filled out the EWM Identification Sheet for the child/ youth	
- Position of the person who filled out the EWM Identification Sheet for the child/ youth	
- Date when the child/ youth was identified (when the EWM Identification Sheet was filled out for the child's/ youth's household)	
- Name and surname of the person who inputted the data in the Register	
- Position of the person who inputted the data input in the Register	
- Date when the data was inputted in the Register	

Case revision:		
- The information about the child/ youth was sent to the school	Yes	No
- The information about the child/ youth was sent to the County Employment Agency (AJOFM)	Yes	No
- The information about this child/ youth was sent to other institution	Yes	No
If YES, clearly write the institution or organization where the data was sent (for instance, DGASPC, centers involved in the Youth Guarantee Program, NGOs, training centers, etc.)		

ROMANIA

**Administration Agreement between the European Commission on behalf of the European Union and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development concerning the Part II Europe 2020 Programmatic Single-Donor Trust Fund (Trust Fund No. TF073208)
(EC Contract No SRSS/S2018/063)**

OUTPUT 1

A Proposed Early Warning Mechanism (EWM) for Early School Leaving Prevention and Action Plan for Implementation

Annex II - Review of Current Practices in EU Countries and in Romania to Address ESL

October 2019



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INTRODUCTION

In developing the early warning mechanism, the World Bank team took into account both international and national practices to prevent and reduce early school leaving. Section 1 presents a review of current practices in nine selected EU countries implementing ESL prevention mechanisms: Austria, Belgium, Croatia, England, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden. These countries were selected based on their ESL rates (as of 2017) which range from the lowest rate (Croatia 3.1%) to the EU average (UK 10.6%). Other criteria included: presence of migrant population, ethnic and linguistic minorities, and mixed communities. Section 2 describes key practices, policies, strategies and programs implemented in Romania to address the early school leaving issue by key institutional players, such as the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Labor, as well as programs and projects carried out by international and national NGOs, associations.

1. INTERNATIONAL PRACTICE

AUSTRIA

Austria has a 9-year compulsory schooling starting at 6 years old until 15 years old, in addition to a one year obligatory kindergarten (regulation since 2010) for 5 year old. All youth under 18 years of age are required to participate in education or training after completion of general compulsory education. The Ministry for Education, Science and Research is responsible for the education sector the federal level: it is responsible for implementation of policies and for supervising schools in educational and technical matters. Municipalities are responsible for the maintenance of schools. Schools have some degree of autonomy on financial matters and up to a point, are able to adapt curriculum to local needs. Diversification of programs at all levels of education is one of the most important aspects of the Austrian education system. 8% of 15-19 year old are enrolled in general upper-secondary programs compared to 82% in vocational pathways. There are approximately 6,800 schools in Austria, more than 90% of which are public. The remaining are private schools maintained by religious communities. School levels are differentiated as follows:

- ✓ Obligatory kindergarten year (children aged 5 years)
- ✓ Primary school grades 1 to 4 (ages 6 -10)
- ✓ Lower secondary level grades 5 to 8, comprises:
 - New secondary school
 - Lower level of academic secondary school
- ✓ Upper secondary level grades 9 to 13, comprises:
 - General education branch
 - Vocational branch

Austria is one of 3 countries in Europe which have developed EWS as a separate system from other management and monitoring systems in the education field. The country's first National reform program (2005-2007) included several measures and initiatives to reduce ESL and youth unemployment. The ministry of Education developed in 2013 (last update 2016) Austria's National strategy preventing early school leaving. The strategy is founded on the principles of prevention, intervention and compensation. The strategy comprises measures on the control level (school system), organizational level (school) and individual level (student). The Austrian definition of the term dropout is based on the European definition: Young adults aged 18 to 24 who have only completed their compulsory school degree and are no longer

involved in any kind of education or training. Austria's 2020 national ESL target is set at 9% (ESL rate decreased from 10.2% in 2008 to 7.4% in 2017).

Early warning signals and methods employed to identify young people at risk

The main high-risk groups are identified as young people with migration backgrounds and young people with unemployed or uneducated parents/households. A three-level model is used to identify risk factors and specify the starting points for intervention, as follows:

1. Macro level (*demographics, society, school systems*). Risk factors in this level include inequality of opportunities for socially weak families and labor market conditions while other factors are related to the education system itself. The main are presented here along with methods used to lessen their impact.

- Early selection process: After completion of the compulsory schooling (ages 6 to 15), Students must choose their educational path in secondary, new lower secondary or secondary general, based on different admission requirements. Early selection negatively affects weaker groups as they are transferred to less demanding types of schools instead of receiving support. Support structures in schools: multi-disciplinary collaborations are important to provide consulting systems to support students with personal or academic problems.
- Year/Grade repetition: Grade repetition negatively affects a student's performance. As such, the implementation of the modular course system, where failing a course can be compensated or corrected, helped reduce grade repetition.

2. Meso level:

- School Environment: This factor includes student-teacher relationship, and the role that the teacher plays as a reference person to his/her students. School and classroom atmosphere and number of students per teacher are also included in this factor.
- Family: The academic success of children is influenced by parenting behavior, parental control and the interest and involvement of family in the school and in their child's education. The educational level of parents also influences children's accomplishment level.
- Peers: Isolated or poorly integrated students are at a higher risk of dropping out. Peer pressure and bullying are also influencing factors.

3. Micro level. This level includes the student's psychological and mental/cognitive characteristics, talents, and personal skills in addition to social behavior and personal values. There is a very clear relationship between the meso and micro levels. Schools are provided with checklists and on-line tools to identify students at risk of ESL. Teachers and principals are requested to identify students at risk of ESL using questionnaires and checklists. These address mainly absenteeism, behavioral issues, and academic performance. The checklists include detailed recommendations for improvement of school attendance, proposals for behavior agreements, and examples of questionnaires for students and parents. A prognostic and monitoring tool, initially developed as a research project, is used to identify young people at risk of ESL. Probability for ESL is calculated for each student based on different combinations of risk and protective factors, based on the 3-level model. Based on the probability calculation the student is assigned to one of three categories: **No need for intervention; Observation Advised; Intervention required.**

Responses to early warning signs

Response strategy includes general (control and organization levels) and specific (individual level) measures.

General measures. These measures target the optimization of the educational system and the improvement of schools; they include:

- ✓ Individualization of learning through the modular course system in secondary school;
- ✓ Emphasizing importance of ECEC and language skills;
- ✓ Introduction of a federal state-wide education frame plan for elementary educational institutions;
- ✓ Standardized competence oriented final exams;
- ✓ Introduction of violence prevention programs;
- ✓ New task profiles for school principals (role reinforcement);
- ✓ Implementation of quality management in the general school system;
- ✓ Inter-disciplinary coordination and monitoring (school based and external consulting systems, close collaboration between the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and consumer protection on the implementation of the national strategy);
- ✓ Measures against truancy (5 stage plan starting with school intervention and up to a maximum punishment of EUR 440 fine);
- ✓ Support to students with migration background.

Specific measures/projects:

- ✓ **Youth coaching program, *Jugendcoaching*** started in 2012 as a pilot project in two Austrian provinces (Vienna and Styria) and was implemented nationwide in 2013. The program was developed by the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education to offer individual consultation and guidance on a free and voluntary basis, to reduce early school leaving and provide students with the support to choose their educational path and future career. It is funded by the Ministry of Social Affairs and receives financial support from the European social fund. The program targets students in the age group 14 to 19 and youth with special educational needs till the age of 24. Teachers, or other appointed personnel, identify student at risk of dropout and coordinate with the youth coaching program. The coaching process has 3 stages: **Stage 1** First conversation - An informal initial consultation with a trained coach (social worker or psychologist) is set. The coach provides information and advice and assesses the need for further intervention. **Stage 2** Additional consultation - the program offers additional consultation sessions (up to 3 months) when further assistance/monitoring are required. **Stage 3** Case management - coach develops an individual plan with targets and support measures for students dealing with more complex problems. The coach closely monitors implementation of the plan and offers support.
- ✓ **Stop Dropout! project**

The project includes tools, to help teachers and counselors identify at risk individuals, evaluate their needs and provide them with flexible support. The project aims at reducing the dropout rates of young learners in vocational education and training. The project is co-financed by the European social fund.

There are three components: (1) the **Risk Detector**, an interactive electronic tool designed to identify students at risk of failure or dropping out. Students learning and behavioral strengths and weaknesses are evaluated along with an assessment of the most appropriate support to be delivered; (2) the **Personal Profile**, is an interview process that implicates the learning in the definition of his/her own strengths and weaknesses and in defining their goals; (3) the **Flexible Prevention and Support System** not only helps prevent ESL but supports those who have already dropped out. It is a partnership between the professionals, communities and the individual student and it is highly individualized.

BELGIUM

Education in Belgium is a regional jurisdiction where each community is responsible for its education system however, the determination of the beginning and end of compulsory education and the minimum

requirements for issuing diplomas is Federal competence. Education in Belgium is compulsory from the age of 6 years until 18 years. The school network consists of official education organized by the communities operated by local municipalities and government aided private education which consists of religious schools and alternative schools such as 'Montessori'.

The education system is structured as follows:

- ✓ Pre-school education - ages 2 to 6;
- ✓ Primary education - ages 6 to 12;
- ✓ Secondary education - ages 12 to 18 - which is provided in four education paths: general, technical and vocational secondary education and secondary education in art. Students aged 15-16 can enter a system of alternating part time learning and working;
- ✓ Special needs primary and secondary schools cater for children who need temporary or permanent specific support.

EWS in Belgium is also implemented regionally where each of the French, Flemish, and German communities has its own system, activities and ESL definition:

- ✓ The Flemish community uses a Flemish definition in addition to the European one: an early school leaver is a young person who is no longer subject to compulsory education and who leaves a regular qualifying program of Flemish secondary education without qualification.
- ✓ The French community defines "early school leaving" as a situation in which a pupil leaves school or training without having graduated from the first cycle of secondary school and who is no longer in education or training.
- ✓ In the German community ESL is not officially defined

Inter-governmental partnerships and collaborative approaches, either through formal coordination bodies or organized cooperation, are instrumental in preventing early school leaving in Belgium which stands at 8.9% in 2017 (up from 8.8% in 2016).

Early warning signals and methods to identify young people at risk

- **Truancy / Absenteeism:**

- ✓ In the French community, schools must report unjustified absences (more than 9 half days in primary education and 31 half days in secondary) to the compulsory Schooling Control Service. A warning letter is sent to parents. In some cases, a counselor in-house visit is scheduled.
- ✓ In Flanders, an electronic system is used to record absences and track students' progress. When more than 30 half days are recorded, the student is referred to the Center of School Counseling.
- ✓ In the German community, *school attendance services* work with students and their families to address truancy. Student registration systems are used to keep track of underage students who should be attending compulsory education.

- **Grade/year repetition:**

Grade repetition is used by schools in Belgium at all education stages (one of the highest rates of school repetition in Europe in 2012). However, since grade repetition is identified as one of the main triggers of early school leaving, schools are encouraged to find alternatives to this practice.

- **Level of academic achievement**

Schools must record students' academic achievements and identify their individual learning needs. Students with low academic performance are identified and provided with necessary individual support.

- **Cultural and language background**

Integration of students with migration backgrounds is one of the main challenges faced by the education system in Belgium. Proficiency in the language of instructions is screened to identify needs for intensive language classes.

Responses to Early Warning Signs

- **French community:**

The French community developed the *Teaching Excellence Pact*, a 15 years (2017-2030) reform plan, which aims at increasing the quality of education and decreasing ESL in the community by more than 50% by 2030. Actions described in the Teaching Excellence Pact aim at decreasing early school leaving through promoting well-being at school, preventing school violence and enhancing integration.

- ✓ Centers for psychological medical and social services and mediation services are available in schools to provide student support.
- ✓ Socio-economic segregation in schools is restricted
- ✓ Individual compensation plans to help students with low academic achievements catch up with their peers.

Early school leaving is also addressed through youth initiatives, such as *Homework schools* and *Mobile squads*.

- ✓ Homework schools play an important role in decreasing early school leaving by providing after school activities and homework support to students aged 6 to 15.
- ✓ Mobile Squads is an external support service. It responds to schools following a written request provide support to primary and secondary students in cases of truancy, behavioral problems and conflicts. Mobile Squads offers training and assistance to teachers and to school managers.

- **Flemish community:**

The Flemish community developed a comprehensive strategy in the *Flemish concept note on early school leaving*. This action plan includes 52 actions focusing on intervention, prevention and compensation. The Flemish comprehensive strategy focuses mainly on prevention measures.

- ✓ The strategy promotes flexible learning paths to support students in completing their education. Individual learning capacities are accommodated through flexible learning content, extra remediation, flexible study time and schedules, and independent work.
- ✓ Teachers are provided with continuous professional training to equip them with the necessary tools to detect early warning signs and prevent ESL. Primary schools must have a care coordinator to help teachers develop care plans.
- ✓ Education and career guidance are offered to students through the website. <https://www.onderwijskiezer.be> developed by the Department of Education.
- ✓ Project *Time out* targets high risk students aged 12 to 18 once all preventive measures are exhausted. These students are retrieved from the education system to receive group-oriented training focusing on social skills, personality and general knowledge, preparing them for reintegration.
- ✓ The *Youth Coaching program* provides peer to peer counseling. Coaches are young dropouts who can share experience and offer insights to their peers. The program has the dual advantage of targeting students at risk (aged 11 to 18), and of providing young dropouts with the opportunity to earn coaching experience and/or return to school.

- **German community:**

The German community developed the Regional Development Concept, which includes two projects: “personalized pupil support” and “Enhancing technical vocational training”. The concept aims at increasing equality and education quality. Students are provided with personalized and differentiated support that considers their strengths and weaknesses and their socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. The system applied in the German community promotes individualized learning, skill-oriented standards and remedial actions to support school success and prevent ESL.

- ✓ Schools must record students’ individual learning requirements in order to provide them with differentiated support, case specific counseling and homework assistance.
- ✓ Education and career guidance is considered a prevention measure and is embedded in primary and secondary curriculum. For this purpose, a skill guide was adopted in 2011 to provide students and their guardians with insights and advice on education and career choices.
- ✓ Technical advisory groups are used to train teachers and improve the quality of education.
- ✓ The *time out* project, providing students excluded from school with full time reintegration training.

CROATIA

Croatia has an eight-year compulsory education starting at the age of 7, in addition to a one-year obligatory pre-school program provided by kindergarten and primary schools. Compulsory education covers all children residing in Croatia regardless of their nationality. Upper Secondary school is voluntary but almost all students enroll in the general or vocational upper secondary courses upon completing lower primary. However, the proportion of 15-year-olds underachieving in Reading, Math and Science is still well below the EU on average. School levels are differentiated as follows:

- ✓ Early childhood education and care (ages 3 months-6 years). *The last year of ECEC is compulsory for all children;*
- ✓ Compulsory Primary and lower secondary education (ages 7-15);
- ✓ Upper secondary education starts at the age of 15 and consists of 3 education paths: 4-year general program prepares students for entry into higher education; 4-5-year vocational program enables students to either enter the labor market or pursue to higher education; 3-year vocational program which leads to a vocational career.

The Majority of education institutions are public and private schools are limited: out of the 800 elementary schools, only 10 are private. Croatian education system is centrally managed by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports (MSES). Other national public bodies involved in the regulation, development and quality control of the educational sector in Croatia are:

- ✓ Education and Teacher Training Agency
- ✓ Agency for Vocational Education and Training
- ✓ Agency for Science and Higher Education
- ✓ Agency for Mobility and EU Programs
- ✓ National Center for External Evaluation of Education

Even though Croatia maintained historically low ESL rates (3.1% in 2017 the lowest rate in Europe), more work still has to be done to increase the quality and relevance of compulsory education. In this context, a curricular reform has been introduced as a pilot project in 2018. Croatia has a specific Early Warning System in place, governed by several education decrees such as the Primary and secondary Education Act and the National standards for Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education. EWS in Croatia is decentralized and is based on delegating the responsibility to schools for identifying and managing distress signals.

Early warning signals and methods employed to identify young people at risk

- **Truancy / Absenteeism**

Schools must register student attendance on the e-register book. (*e-register is an electronic database for schools to register attendance and other information about and for students. Parents have access to their child's information on the database*) If the number of missed classes increases, the school must ensure that school counselors, management and other experts are involved together with parents to address the problem. The e-register book is also used to improve communication between the school and parents as it provides constant access to individualized school data.

- **Level of academic achievement**

Teachers raise a flag when a student receives poor grades in specific subjects. Students with low academic performance are identified and provided with necessary individual support.

- **Identification of Groups at risk**

Students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, children from national minorities and Roma children are identified to receive specific targeted measures to prevent early leaving.

Responses to Early Warning Signs

- **Multidisciplinary teams**

Professionals in education including psychologists, social workers, speech therapists and sign language interpreters, provide in school support in all education stages. The multi-disciplinary teams identify the individual needs of students and develop specific work plans in coordination with the teachers and parents. Children with special needs are accompanied by pedagogical assistants who provide support in class and in extra-curricular activities. Gifted children are also identified at an early stage. They are included in special programs tailored to their cognitive, social and emotional needs.

- **Individualized learning:**

- ✓ Schools must provide personalized and differentiated teaching methods and work resources to accommodate the individual needs and capacities of students.
- ✓ Teachers should raise the awareness of other learners to the needs of talented and special needs students to create collaborative environment and incite motivation.
- ✓ Students from national minorities have the right to education in their mother tongue but must study Croatian as a second language.

- **Targeted measures:**

- ✓ Specific targeted measures for students with disadvantaged economic background include funding of education tools, transport and continuing education for students in vocational programs.
- ✓ Children who are members of the Roma minority are included in the pre-primary program to ensure to increase the possibilities for their successful inclusion during compulsory primary education.

- **Education and Career guidance:**

Education and career guidance is not embedded in the national curriculum. However, though the National curriculum framework of 2010 includes guidance as a compulsory topic (*The framework is not implemented yet*). Currently, in school psychologists and social workers deliver education and career guidance at lower secondary level whereas guidance in the secondary level is provided by external experts.

- **Other Projects/Programs:**

Preventing Early School Leaving through inclusive strategies under the Erasmus+ program aims to train teachers and other school staff to use innovative methods and techniques to prevent early leaving from education

ENGLAND

Education in England is compulsory starting at 5 years old till 16 years old. Young people aged 16 to 18 must be in full or part-time education or training. The general school network in England includes state funded schools (the majority) and private independent fee-charging schools (attended by 7% only of school age children), in addition to structured home schooling. State funded schools include:

- ✓ Academy schools: funded directly by the department of education, and managed independently of local authorities
- ✓ Community schools: managed directly by local authorities
- ✓ Free schools: established in 2010 to compensate for the need for additional local schools
- ✓ Foundation schools: fully funded by the government through local authorities. School land and building are usually owned by a charitable foundation, which appoints a governing body responsible for school management
- ✓ Faith schools (voluntary aided and voluntary controlled) mainly associated with the with either the Church of England or the Roman Catholic church

The education system is structured as follows:

- ✓ ISCED 0: Nursery schools (ages 0-4), primary school reception class (ages 4-5)
- ✓ ISCED 1: Primary education consists of key stage one (ages 5-7), key stage 2 (ages 7-11)
- ✓ ISCED 2: Secondary schools provide key stage 3 (ages 11-14)
- ✓ ISCED 3: key stage 4 is also provided through secondary schools (ages 14-16)
- ✓ From age 16 to 18/19, students must be in full time or part time education, through:
- ✓ Sixth form school (year 12 and year 13 provided through secondary schools)
- ✓ Sixth form college (offers full time education to 16-18/19-year old only)
- ✓ Further education college (legally constituted as further education corporations to offer full time vocational and general education programs)
- ✓ Apprenticeship or traineeship

EWS in England focuses on local pilots and on sharing good practices between schools; simply put, the EWS places responsibility on schools. Government departments collaborate with local authorities and schools through the National strategy to prevent early School leaving and maximize the engagement of young people in education, Building Engagement, Building Futures (published in 2011). The strategy is developed by the Department of Education, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Department for Work and Pensions. Its implementation requires close cross-sector collaboration between the Department of Education and Department of Work and Pension, local authorities and schools. The term ESL is not commonly used in England, rather the term NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) is defined as young people aged 16 to 24 who are not attending any form of education, apprenticeship, training or employment. The ESL rate in England decreased from 16.9% in 2008 to 10.6% in 2017.

Early warning signals and methods employed to identify young people at risk

Indicators of NEET. Local authorities and schools developed Risk of NEET Indicators (RoNI), a set of indicators and tools designed to help schools identify students at risk of becoming NEET and to target support more efficiently and effectively to these students at risk. RoNIs are based on NEET data and disaggregated by local area. The localized RoNIs consist of data on young people who have disengaged from education: for example, patterns of behavior, attendance, parental engagement, background, and academic achievement. These models are then used to predict which students in grades 9, 10 and 11 are

at risk of leaving school. Some local areas have expanded this approach to primary schools so as to provide support at an earlier age because local authorities must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive full time education.

Truancy / Absenteeism. Every school must record and track absences on a daily basis through an electronic attendance registry. A unified system of attendance and absence codes is used to simplify collection of statistics data from the School Census System. The Department of Education uses the collected data to produce regular Statistics reports. School staff must use professional judgment as to when a flag should be raised. Parents/guardians are contacted directly in case of unjustified absences.

Achievement Level. The level of Academic Achievement in English and Math in primary schools is the most important factor to predict successful engagement in later stages. School attainment is monitored through regular teacher assessments and statutory testing. Students in years 1 and 2 will also be subject to a phonics check.

Parents and schools use statistics reports to compare each student's performance against national standards and other schools.

Behavioral issues (boredom in class, drastic behavioral changes, bullying):

- ✓ Schools must have a behavior policy in place. The policy should include safeguarding measures and appoint a safeguarding lead to prevent bullying and anti-discrimination. The school behavior policy should be well communicated to all staff members.
- ✓ Teachers and support staff must receive regular training to be able to better identify, assess and properly address behavioral problems and the underlying contributing factors.
- ✓ When teachers raise a concern, the case is immediately addressed by the support staff within the school. If concerns escalate the case is referred to social services.

Responses to Early Warning Signs

Multi-disciplinary teams. Multi-disciplinary partnerships at local/institutional level are well established (Behavioral and Educational Support Teams). Professionals such as school heads, teachers, guidance specialists, psychologists, social workers, youth workers, as well as speech and language specialists are all involved in identifying and responding to early warning signs.

Students are provided with individual support. The needs of students with learning difficulties should be addressed in class through differentiation of teaching methods and resources, well-established class routines and regular updates to parents. Cross sector cooperation mechanisms are well described in the National strategy to prevent ESL. Schools must seek and secure any relevant external resource and can refer the case of students at risk to the relevant authorities depending on the problem and risk factors.

Education and Career guidance. Education and Career guidance is explicitly used as a prevention measure and is embedded in the national curriculum. Teachers and counselors must provide guidance to students from year 8 to year 13 to help them make better education and career choices.

Targeted support to students with disadvantaged socio-economic background. Specific measures and policies target students at risk of early school leaving due to disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, such as:

- ✓ The Discretionary bursary fund targets disadvantaged 16-18-year-old students and provides support for learning tools, clothing, meals and transport;
- ✓ The care to learn scheme helps young parents under the age of 20 stay in education through providing child care support.

Fines/penalties. Fines to parents in case of truancy are used as a last resort when all other measures fail. This method aims at placing greater responsibility on parents and upper secondary students. However, it is often not implemented as the process is long and expensive.

Projects. *Beanstalk* is Children's Literature Charity working closely with partner schools, they recruit, train and support volunteers to provide reading support for children between ages 3 and 13. The Charity currently reaches approximately 11,000 children across England annually. *Magic breakfast* is a registered UK charity offering healthy breakfast and expert support to primary and secondary disadvantaged students. The charity aims at ending hunger as a barrier to learning. It works with 480 primary, secondary and special educational needs schools and currently covers 40,300 students. *The Peep learning* together program is run by the People Strategy. The program offers support to pre-school students to children's personal, social and emotional development, communication and language, early literacy, early numeracy and health and physical development.

THE NETHERLANDS

Education in The Netherlands is compulsory for all children from 5 years of age (most students however attend primary school at 4 years of age) until the student receives a basic qualification (a diploma at the level of senior general secondary education, pre-university education or senior secondary vocational education), or turns 18. The general school network consists of public, special (religious) and general special (neutral) schools. All schools are financed by the government. Private schools are not common in The Netherlands. The Dutch education system combines a centralized education policy with a decentralized administration and management of schools. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science is responsible for statutory requirements, while administration and management of schools are organized locally. Each school board is responsible for the quality of education and for meeting attainment targets.

The Dutch inspectorate of education is responsible for:

- ✓ The quality of education
- ✓ Adherence to educational laws
- ✓ Proper spending of funds (legitimacy and functionality)

The main school levels differentiated by age are as follows:

- ✓ Childcare/Early childhood education (6-8 weeks to 4 years)
- ✓ Primary education (ages 5-12)
- ✓ Secondary education includes schools providing:
 - Pre-vocational secondary education (4 years)
 - Senior general secondary education (5 years)
 - Pre-university education (6 years)

Special primary and secondary schools also cater for students with special needs.

Early school leavers in the Netherlands are defined as students who leave school without the Basic Qualification (startkwalificatie). EWS is applied regionally through a comprehensive strategy entitled *Drive to Reduce Dropout Rates*. A budget to address early school leaving is allocated to each region and schools receive performance related funding for contributing to the reduction of ESL. A formal multi-level cooperation body was established to enhance synergies between government departments and local authorities and to strengthen commitment to prevention of Early School Leaving, which stands 7.1% in 2017 (down from 8% in 2016).

Early warning signals and methods employed to identify young people at risk

- **Truancy / Absenteeism and Behavior and academic performance:**

Schools register student information including attendance in the Basic Record for Education database (*BRON*) on a daily basis for truancy and at regular intervals for other factors. A unique identification number is assigned to each student to better track progress. Monthly reports are generated from the portal to track specific flagged cases and the general population.

Responses to Early Warning Signs

- **Multi-disciplinary teams: Behavior and Education Support Teams (BEST)**

Behavior and Education Support Teams (BEST) are supported by the central government since 2002. BESTs are integrated in the school structure to support children and youth (as well as their parents and the schools) with behavior, developmental, psychosocial, and/or learning problems. Activities include diagnostics, coordination, advisory support to teachers, and intervention planning and prevention. The teams are chaired by the school and are comprised of educational experts, a school medical doctor, a social worker and a professional from the children and youth care office. Other professionals can be included

from mental health and police if necessary. BEST is a major initiative to strengthen partnerships between education with health and human services to improve outcomes for children and youth. Educational and health and human services are well integrated, allowing professionals to efficiently monitor and assess emotional well-being, behavior, development, and educational attainment. Warning signals are immediately followed by consultations, referrals and intervention actions.

- **Intensive personal coaching:**

The program targets secondary level students. It consists of two tracks: preventive and remedial.

The preventive track includes the following:

- ✓ Intake sessions with all students to identify warning signs, assess required remedial actions and arrange for follow up
- ✓ Contact with parents is established
- ✓ Intensive coaching sessions focus on study skills (self-reliance, organization and planning), interpersonal and social skills.
- ✓ Coaches regularly attend lessons to observe the student in class and provide study support
- ✓ In case of unjustified absence, the coach directly contacts the student and parents. An action plan to prevent further absences is set.

The remedial track consists of follow up with dropouts to guide them into alternative education paths.

- **Other good practices:**

Medical advice for sick-reported students (MASS)

The project is spread over 13 municipalities and it targets students in primary and secondary education. The aim is to address school absenteeism due to sickness reporting (medical absenteeism) through early identification of students with high absenteeism due to medical reasons. Students are provided, in coordination with their parents, with medical advice and follow up from the youth healthcare physicians. Since the introduction of MASS, the level of absenteeism due to reported sickness decreased from 8.5 days in 12 school weeks to 4.9 days within a period of 12 months.

Getting started:

Getting started is a program introduced in 2012 targeting young people aged 15-23. The project aims at providing students at risk of early school leaving and those who have already left, to continue education and enter the job market.

The program consists of 4 stages:

- ✓ A comprehensive diagnosis during which the students' specific issues are assessed and program goals are set
- ✓ Internship or education program with the focus of reintegration in normal school routine
- ✓ Developing skills and making use of the skills learned
- ✓ A follow up period during which coaching sessions are limited and students function independently

POLAND

Compulsory education in Poland (new structure after the 2017 reforms) starts at the age of 6 and lasts for 9 years (including an obligatory pre-school year for 6-year old). Young people aged 15-18 have an obligation to attend education or training (part-time compulsory education) either through general secondary schools, vocational or in-job training. General secondary schools remain the most popular, attended by 47.8% of students in 2017.

The general school network in Poland consists of public schools (the majority) in addition to private schools, which have an extensive autonomy while benefiting from public funding (grants).

The governance of the education sector is a shared responsibility at the National, Regional and Local levels. At the national level the Ministry of Education is responsible for establishing the national education policy, national curriculum and providing funding. At the regional level, the responsibilities are shared between Head of the Regional Education authorities, Local government bodies (at the province, district and commune level). They are responsible for implementing the national strategy and for supervising schools. At the school level the Head of the school, the teaching council, school council, and parents' council are responsible for school administration and management (of which establishment of EWS), internal quality assurance and other tasks concerning educational support. School levels (new structure under gradual implementation until 2023), differentiated by age are as follows:

- ✓ Early childhood education and care: crèche and kids club (ages 0-3 years), pre-school (ages 3-6). Last year of preschool (age 6) is compulsory
- ✓ Compulsory education: single structure 8-year primary school (ages 7 -15)
- ✓ Upper secondary education includes the following paths: 4-year general secondary school; 5-year technical secondary school; stage I 3-year vocational school; stage II 2-year vocational school.

Poland does not have a centralized Early Warning System even though there are national level policies and strategies such as the Education Act of 1991, the reforms introduced in 2017 by the law on school education and the Strategy for the Development of Human Capital 2013-2020. The Education Act defines the duties and obligations of schools: schools must develop their own EWS and procedures of intervention, compatible with general regulations and tailored to the local needs. Schools are free to choose the design and implementation methods. Collaborative approaches between National agencies and local authorities/schools have also been instrumental in preventing early school leaving, which has been consistently low: ESL rates hover in the 5.7% - 5% bracket from 2008 till 2017. The national 2020 ESL target is set at 4.5%.

Early warning signals and methods employed to identify young people at risk

- **Truancy / Absenteeism:**

The absenteeism policy is strict. A high level of absenteeism is defined as being absent without an excuse for 50% of school hours within a given month. Schools record and manage student absences on the education information system and inform local authorities automatically when truancy reaches the benchmark. Parents are informed immediately and directly in case of truancy through a warning letter which also calls for a meeting.

- **Level of achievement:**

Though each school has its own achievement policies/rules, a flag is usually raised when a student receives a poor average in general achievement. Parents are directly informed. A strict monitoring system is

developed to measure students' results on a regular basis, in addition to a standardized final exam at the end of upper secondary school.

- **Year/grade repetition:**

Grade repetition is possible at all education stages. In grades 1 to 3 however, it should be justified by a psychologist and approved by parents.

- **Behavioral issues (boredom in class, drastic behavioral changes, bullying):**

Behavioral issues are assessed by the teachers and school psychologists/counselors. Promoting a positive and safe school environment, providing students with opportunities for self-expression, and the measures to resolve conflict and increase confidence are used to address problems in this category.

Responses to Early Warning Signs

- **Multi-disciplinary teams and individual action plans**

Well-defined Roles and collaborative actions/teamwork are instrumental in effectively responding to early warning signals:

- ✓ Teachers identify the individual needs of the students
- ✓ Principals organize psychological and educational support
- ✓ School psychologists develop with teachers and parents, an individual support program tailored to the student's specific needs. They also provide therapy, individual or group activities and counseling for parents.
- ✓ Career guidance counselors provide information and advice about education path choices.

The school may also call on external resource such as youth workers, social educators, or special education teachers, depending on the problem and risk factors.

Counseling and teacher training centers provide teachers with continuous training to improve their skills in identifying warning signals and support them in developing individual educational programs.

- **Extra-curricular activities:**

Schools must develop plans for extra-curricular activities to help students develop their talents, knowledge and independence. The aim is to restore and develop student's interest in education. Such programs appear to be supported through overall government financing. https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/national-reforms-school-education-50_en

- **Fines/penalties:**

When a warning letter is issued in case of truancy, the student must return to school within a specified deadline. If the deadline is not met, school principals must initiate legal proceedings against the parents. Benefit payments may be withdrawn or penalties imposed.

- **Other measures:**

Several Projects and initiatives are used to prevent ESL:

- ✓ Forum Theater against Early School Leaving (*FOTEL*) targets students aged 13 to 16 to prevent early school leaving through using drama techniques to help students gain a deeper understanding of diverse issues/problems and their possible solutions. The project aims at improving school climate, motivating students and resolving conflict.
- ✓ The social action *School without violence* includes workshops for teachers, publication of examples of good practice, advice and support, 'day without violence' celebrations in schools, volunteer week and a photo competition

PORTUGAL

The Portuguese education system is very centralized in terms of organization and funding. However, pre-school and basic and secondary education schools have some autonomy, namely at pedagogical level, as well as regarding timetables and non-teaching staff management. Compulsory education is 12 years starting with basic education and ending with completion of upper secondary education.

The Portuguese education system is structured in three levels: pre-school education (3-6 years old), basic education (6 to 15 years old) and upper secondary education (15 to 18 years old). Basic education has a duration of 9 years and is divided into three sequential and interlinked cycles: (i) first cycle corresponds to 4 years of schooling (grades 1-4); (ii) second cycle corresponds to the next 2 years (grades 5-6); (iii) third cycle has a duration of 3 years and corresponds to lower secondary education (grades 7-9). Upper secondary education has a duration of 3 years and it is organized into different and permeable paths focusing on access to further education or preparation for working life.

In 2016, general government expenditure on education was 4.9 percent as a share of GDP and 10.8 percent as a share of total government spending. According to national data, over 90 percent of expenditure is for salaries, while investment in education infrastructure is heavily dependent on EU financial support. Schools have very limited budgetary autonomy. The school network comprises 13.750 pre-university education units (school year 2016/17) accommodating around 1.6 million students. Also, 193 new public pre-school classrooms were opened between 2016-2018 with the government aiming at extending the network to provide universal access for children aged 3-5.

Portugal has made considerable progress in the last decade in reducing ESL rate (from 28.3 percent in 2010 to 12.6 percent in 2017, with over 20 percent ESL rates in the autonomous regions of Madeira and Azores. This positive trend was explained mainly by the extension of the compulsory school age to age 18, the launch of the national program for school success in 2016, along with the autonomy and curricular flexibility process (launched in 2017) and the gradual increase in parents' education levels.

Early warning signals and methods employed to identify young people at risk

Portugal has a national database that collects monthly information from school staff, students and social support benefits. It collects information on students on an individual basis. Information is biographic (age, special needs, social support benefits, information on parents such as profession and employment status as well as education level) and refers to the activity of each student in the system: absences, class, school year, evaluation. Data is accessible at individual, school, regional and national level and is delivered on a business intelligence system that is a support system for school managers and other decision makers. Cross sectorial cooperation is possible through a nationwide network of Commissions for the Protection of At-Risk Children and Youth managed by the municipalities. Each commission is composed of a small executive team of 3 to 5 full-time members representing municipality, social security services, local NGOs and teachers. This team works directly with a larger team also representing health services, education, security, parents and local associations where ESL is a high and legal priority for different teams. By law, both teams are responsible for ESL and the protection of children's rights to remain in education until the age of 18.

Responses to Early Warning Signs

In order to reduce grade repetition in basic education, Portugal has introduced an extraordinary period at the end of the school year where students from 4th and 6th grades that failed national exams (Portuguese and Math) receive additional support from teachers and have the opportunity to take again the exam.

Students or groups facing difficulties also have a pedagogic support plan designed by teachers, parents and school psychologists if needed.

Interventions at school level are implemented by multidisciplinary teams comprising counsellors, psychologists, social workers and mediators providing support to students and groups facing difficulties. In some cases, when learning difficulties are more severe, additional resources are deployed to cooperate with external specialized therapists that come to schools to support students. Also, various targeted programs are in place and are specifically designed for territories, schools, classes or pupils that are at risk of ESL or performing below target, as follows:

- **The program for Priority Intervention Educational Areas (TEIP)** was launched in 1996 and it targets schools located in socially and economically disadvantaged areas. A second version of the program was implemented from 2006 having as main objective ESL reduction and fostering educational success. In 2012, a third version started reinforcing the second version objectives and highlighting the quality of the learning outcomes. At present, the TEIP program includes 137 school clusters representing 17 percent of total school clusters. All schools develop specific improvement plans, based on an agreement, between the school and school authorities, on measures, targets, evaluation and additional resources. The specific improvement plan covers four different areas: (i) support to improve learning; (ii) management and organization of school clusters' measures; (iii) prevention of ESL, absenteeism and behavior, and (iv) school/families/community relations.
- **The Mais Sucesso Escolar (MSE) and Percursos Curriculares Alternativos (Alternative Curricula Pathways)** program are run by the Ministry of Education and Science and have nationwide coverage. The TEIP and MSE programs have recently been extended covering over 25 percent of pupils and schools in Portugal. The main focus is on providing extra support to pupils (academic, personal, social) inside and outside the classroom in the form of mentoring/tutoring, intercultural mediation, guidance and vocational experiences. These include in-service teacher training, as well as parent and community involvement.

Moreover, interventions at family and community levels are carried out by dedicated NGOs operating in education deploying specially trained mediators to work in schools and provide support to students outside classes. Based on a well-established methodology, mediators help selected at-risk pupils develop their non-cognitive skills that will enhance their beliefs, self-esteem, conscientiousness and openness to experience, which are essential for school success.

The Integrated Program of Education and Training is dedicated to supporting early school leavers over 15 years old to complete lower secondary education. Dedicated second chance classes may be organized in regular schools, NGO's, communities' facilities and enterprises. Each group has a full-time tutor and a small group of teachers develop a tailored curriculum with a high degree of flexibility and strong vocational focus. Students may enroll and complete their studies at any time of the year, while the duration depends on their own pace.

SLOVENIA

The education system in Slovenia is organized as a public service rendered by public and private institutions that provide officially recognized or accredited programs. Public schools in Poland are secular by law and the school environment is autonomous. Municipalities fund kindergartens, primary and lower secondary

schools, while upper secondary schools are funded by the state. Education is compulsory in basic education for 9 years starting at the age of 6 years. School levels are as follows:

- ✓ Optional pre-school education (ages 11 months – 6 years)
- ✓ Compulsory basic education: organized in a single-structure nine-year basic school attended by pupils aged 6 to 15 years.
- ✓ Upper secondary education 2 to 5 years of different education paths: general, vocational and professional (ages 15-19)

The education system is governed through cross-sector cooperation: The ministry of education, science and sport is the main governmental authority for education, while the ministry of [Ministry of Family, Labor, Social affairs and Equal Opportunities](#) is responsible for the social status of students and their families. In addition, there are 2 independent national agencies responsible for quality assurance, evaluation and assessment of education and training:

- ✓ The National Examinations Centre : a central institution for external assessment of pupils, apprentices, and adults.
- ✓ The Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency: responsible for quality assurance in higher education.

The definition of ESL in Slovenia is linked to the completion of basic compulsory education: early school leavers are defined as young people who leave education without completing basic education. ESL in Slovenia is not addressed through a specific national strategy or program. However, the long-standing general policies and measures in place may explain the historically low ESL rates: ESL rate stood at 5.1% in 2008 and at 4.3% in 2017; this is significantly lower than the EU average of 10.6% in 2017. Early warning systems are an integral part of school monitoring and management systems.

Early warning signals and methods employed to identify young people at risk

Truancy / Absenteeism - systemic late arrivals and a level of absenteeism without an excuse for more than a week in basic education, and more than 3 days in upper secondary school are considered a distress signal. Absenteeism is managed at the level of the school. Teachers must record and keep track of absences electronically.

Level of achievement - teachers raise a flag when a student receives 3 poor grades in different subjects. Parents are regularly informed of their child's grades through written reports and during parental consultation meetings.

National assessment exams are mandatory at the end of year 6 and year 9. Results are used to acquire additional information about students' knowledge level. Low achievers are provided with tailored support and follow up by specialized counselor. Parents are also involved in addressing problems of this nature. If low achievement persists, the student can be referred to the committee of placement of children with special needs. Once a special needs status is issued, school work is adjusted to meet the student's individual needs.

Behavioral and Developmental issues - advisory services consisting of a psychologist and a social pedagogue are available on school premises in all education stages (starting at kindergarten). Teachers must report their observations to the advisory service counselors who may work with external social workers and parents if a problem is detected. Pre-school teachers and counselors must report potential problems to schools upon enrolment of the student in grade one.

Responses to Early Warning Signs

- **Multi-disciplinary teams**

Teachers are responsible for initial monitoring and reporting of warning signs. For this purpose, teachers are equipped during their studies with specific competencies to effectively identify different signals of ESL and risk factors and work with students at risk.

In addition to the advisory service available within school premises, schools must call on relevant external resource such as youth workers, social educators, or special education teachers, depending on the problem and risk factors. Counselors may be also be assigned to the family. Coordination between teachers, in-school counselors and parents, is instrumental in identifying at risk students and providing them with an individualized action plan/program to address challenges.

- **Individual action plans**

Schools in Slovenia provide students with tailored support to meet their educational and developmental needs. Students who are experiencing learning or developmental difficulties are identified at an early stage in order to provide them with relevant individual support such as, individualized learning plans, additional teaching, and differentiation of teaching methods. Education and career guidance is also provided, starting in Elementary school, to aid students in choosing their education path based on individual professional interest and academic performance. In addition, special measures are provided to students with migration or minority background (Roma community) to successfully integrate them in the education system:

- ✓ Students with migration background are provided with language support such as attending classes in their mother tongue, in addition to remedial classes in the language of instructions.
- ✓ Members of the Roma community are identified as a special group whose rights to specific measures (ease of registration, additional assistance, remedial classes and awareness-raising on Roma culture), are governed by legal provisions.

- **Youth work and Remedial measures**

Youth initiatives such as Youth Project Learning targets young adults aged 15 to 25. The project is a program of non-formal education to stimulate students' interest in pursuing their formal education.

SWEDEN

Sweden has a nine-year compulsory school starting at 7 years old. Upper secondary school is a voluntary, three-year school form. Nevertheless, almost all young people in Sweden (around 90 per cent) start upper secondary school but not everyone who starts will finish. The general Swedish school network consists of different types of schools: municipal (the majority), independent and state school authorities. The proportion of independent schools is the greatest at the upper secondary level. In total, there are approximately 7,500 school units (and close to 10,000 pre-school units) with approximately 100,000 students. The main school levels differentiated by age are:

- ✓ Preschool (children aged 1-5), Preschool class (children aged 6);
- ✓ Compulsory school (ages 7-15);
- ✓ Upper secondary school (ages 15/16-18/19)

Within the school sector, there are four independent national agencies:

- ✓ The Swedish National Agency for Education - sets up frameworks and guidelines for education delivery and assessment. The agency is also responsible for the annual education status reporting, teacher certification, national tests and support for education priorities.
- ✓ The Swedish Schools Inspectorate - supervise, provide quality assurance, resolve complaints and authorize independent schools.
- ✓ The National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools (SPSM) works with special education teaching materials and runs special schools for pupils with certain disabilities.
- ✓ The Swedish Centre for Educational Research was started in 2015. This agency is commissioned to systematically compile research results and make them available to teachers, head teachers and other actors within the school system.

Equity is the most important principle in the Swedish education system: Education and learning tools are free for everyone, regardless of geographical location, social, or economic circumstances. The educational system in Sweden is decentralized, giving most of the responsibilities to municipalities. Municipalities are required by law to monitor the number of inhabitants aged 16 – 19 years who are not attending upper secondary education in order to offer them education and training perspectives. Therefore, ESL is defined as people who not having completed upper secondary education, although upper secondary education is not compulsory. Sweden's ESL rate was 7.7% in 2017 up from 7.4% in 2016. Sweden does not have a specific, centralized early warning system in education even though there are national level policies such as the Education Act. EWSs are implemented locally through municipalities and schools. The Education Act and new curriculum issued in 2011, obligate schools to have EWS in order to give students the needed support to complete their education. Schools are however free to choose the design and implementation methods. This approach has led to several innovations and success stories among local municipalities and schools. Even though the school is the center for EWS, multi-agency partnerships, and collaborative approaches between National agencies and local municipalities/schools have also been instrumental in preventing early school leaving.

Early warning signals and methods employed to identify young people at risk

Truancy / Absenteeism - absenteeism policy is strict. A high level of absenteeism is defined as being absent without an excuse for more than 30% of all school hours during the scholastic year. Some municipalities have developed digital software to efficiently manage registration of student absences.

Deteriorating achievement - in order to better assess student performance, national tests in more subjects and in earlier grades have been introduced. A flag is raised when a student receives poor grades in several different subjects. Parents/guardians are notified immediately.

Year/grade repetition - it is rare to make students repeat the school year as the repetition of a scholastic year is believed to lead to even weaker performance by the student concerned. As such, grade repetition is rarely used as an indicator of potential ESL.

Behavioral issues (boredom in class, drastic behavioral changes, bullying) - The availability of support staff (psychologist, school nurse, doctor, and guidance counselor) on school premises is a common practice in Swedish schools. The individual needs of every student are addressed, and tailored support is provided. Parents/guardians are also involved in addressing/solving problems in this category.

Bullying is addressed through a combination of methods (positive school climate, pupil participation, gender specific anti-bullying methods, disciplinary strategies, etc.) to help both bullies and victims and provide a non-discriminatory environment for students. For this purpose, the Ombudsman against discrimination has launched an e-tool, to provide practical tips, references, guidelines and preventive measures to aid schools in writing annual plans against discrimination. Some schools successfully applied the “whole school approach” which relies on the entire school body (teachers, staff members, and students) to report and combat bullying and degrading treatment.

Responses to Early Warning Signs

Multi-disciplinary teams and individual action plans. All school personnel, including teachers, school psychologists and counselors, social pedagogues, career guidance practitioners, social workers, youth workers, are compelled to report to the head teacher if they identify a student at risk. The head teacher has the responsibility to investigate if a student needs specific support and to ensure that an individualized action plan/program is set to address the problem.

In addition to the support staff available within school premises, schools must resort to any relevant external resource such as youth workers, social educators, or special education teachers, depending on the problem and risk factors.

Ongoing monitoring. Once students have entered a support program, their progress is monitored on an ongoing basis. Remedial interventions for young people who have dropped out of school proved effective in bringing students back to education. Such interventions worked through close follow up and intense individualized measures such as coaching and guidance, motivational and study support, social and skills training.

Fines/penalties. Benefit payments may be withdrawn, or penalties imposed when truancy is recurrent. This method aims at placing greater responsibility on parents and upper secondary students to attend school. However, it is often not implemented as this approach doesn't take into consideration the broader issues that the student may be facing and the hardship that the penalties may exasperate.

Digital platform. Plug Innovation (www.plugininnovation.se) is the national digital cluster for dropout prevention. The platform gathers information, compares and assesses dropout prevention methods used in different projects, in order to share successes and help users identify the most effective practices in ESL prevention.

2. NATIONAL PRACTICES

MINISTRY OF NATIONAL EDUCATION

In 2014, the Ministry of National Education (MoNE), with the support of the World Bank, developed a National Strategy for Reducing ESL which represented an ex-ante conditionality for Romania's access to EU funds under the Programming Period 2014-2020. The National Strategy includes prevention, intervention and compensation measures to reduce ESL rate to 11.3% by 2020, while ensuring equal access to quality education for all children. Going further, the WB supported the MoNE with designing a monitoring and evaluation framework to monitor the implementation progress of education strategies, including the Strategy for reducing ESL, and associated instruments for collecting and analyzing data and information to provide direction for action, help mobilize resources, plan, manage, and control operations.

Early warning signs and methods for identifying children and young people at risk

The National Strategy for Reducing ESL also envisages the development of an early warning system comprising measures and actions targeting lower secondary students at risk of dropping out. In this respect, as first step, the MoNE conducted an assessment of the current practices to collect, analyze and use data to address early school leaving in Romania. The key findings and recommendations of this study were considered in developing the proposed EWM. In the second stage, the MoNE is assisted by the WB to develop an early warning system which comprises an early warning mechanism including a package of activities/measures, and a methodology for data collection and use for EWM implementation.

Response to early warning signs

Moreover, over the years, the MoNE has been implementing several intervention and compensation measures/programs to address school dropout, such as: School after School and Second Chance programs, the Croissant and milk program for preschool and primary students, social vouchers for kindergartens, the Money for high school program for high school students, etc. For example, many stakeholders consider the school after school program to be successful and extremely useful in reducing ESL because its main target are children from poor families and disadvantaged groups at highest risk of dropping out. However, the implementation of this program poses many challenges, especially in terms of ensuring adequate and sustainable financing. In the context of low/lack of funding, schools have very limited resources to run this program and to support students at risk. This fact was also confirmed by most stakeholders interviewed during the field visits conducted by MEN at the end of 2018 (as part monitoring the implementation progress of National Strategy for Reducing ESL).

Over time, the Second Chance program became the main compensation policy implemented by the Ministry at national level. According to SIIR data, the participation in the Second Chance program has constantly increased in the last years, with 14.691 students in 2018/19 (over 70% of students are enrolled in urban schools). The highest increase in student participation in this type of program was registered in lower secondary education.

At present, the MoNE is coordinating a new project (CRED - Relevant Curriculum, Open Education for all) for a duration of four year and a total allocation of 42 million euro. The project aims at preventing early school leaving through systemic measures to develop a unitary competency-based curriculum to

ensure equal opportunities for students from disadvantaged groups, including for students in enrolled in second chance programs. The project targets directly the Second Chance program by: reviewing the methodologies for running the program, developing a new curriculum for Second Chance (curricula, school curricula) based on the new curriculum developed for mainstream education, developing adequate educational resources for this program and training the teachers in specific fields/areas. A total of 55,000 teachers will be trained during the CRED project in using innovative teaching methods - 40,000 primary teachers, and 15,000 secondary teachers.

MINISTRY OF LABOR AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

The Ministry of Labor and Social Justice, in partnership with the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Health is currently coordinating a project on *Development and implementation of integrated community services to reduce poverty and social exclusion*. This project is funded through the *Human Capital Operational Program* which aims at developing a mechanism of integrated services at local level, including interventions in relevant areas for reducing social exclusion and poverty, namely social participation and access to rights and resources, health, education, employment, housing and obtaining identity documents.¹ The project will be implemented in 139 communities in 40 counties.

Early warning signs and methods for identifying children and young people at risk

At present, there are no methodologies in place, but the project aims to develop an integrated package of methodologies, tools and procedures, which will guide and support community team members in providing integrated community services. The members of the community team are social workers, community nurses, health mediators and school counsellors/ school mediators. According to Order No. 2277/12.12.2016² on the approval of the framework protocol for the implementation of the integrated community services, in order to prevent social exclusion and fight poverty, the key indicators are as follows: low level of education, school dropout and low school participation, poor school performance, low access to informal education programmes, access to school counselling and career guidance services, etc. (Art. 2, Paragraph 2, Letter b).

Response to early warning signs

The project site indicates that, regarding the intervention from an education perspective, specific procedures and working tools will be developed for the purpose of developing packages of school counselling/ mediation services, which will be discussed and validated in eight regional workshops.

¹ Source: <http://serviciicomunitare.ro/despre>.

²<https://www.edu.ro/sites/default/files/Ordin%20comun%20MENCs-MMFPSPVMSF%20ref.%20combatere%20excluziune%20sociala.pdf>

UNICEF

Framework for monitoring out of school children³

The study describes the framework necessary to create a monitoring system for out-of-school children and adolescents (OOSCA) or at risk of dropping out in Romania. The analysis was carried out in 2016 by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics and UNICEF, authors: Frank van Cappelle and Sheena Bell, Luminița Costache (coordinator). The report is based on the model of the five dimensions of exclusion (5DE) included in the conceptual and methodological framework of the *Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children*.⁴ Similar to the MATE scheme, the distinction is made between children who are at risk of dropping out and those who are not in school, but, unlike the MATE scheme, a differentiation of exclusion in education is carried out based on education levels - primary/ secondary school, corresponding to the five dimensions taken into account:

- ✓ For out-of-school children: (i) Dimension 1: Preschool children who do not attend kindergarten or primary school; (ii) Dimension 2: Children of primary school age who are not enrolled in primary or lower secondary education; (iii) Dimension 3: Children of secondary school age who are not included in primary or lower secondary education
- ✓ For children at risk of dropout: (i) Dimension 4: Children who attend primary school, but are at risk of dropping out and (ii) Dimension 5: Children who attend lower secondary school, but are at risk of dropping out.

Early warning signs and methods for identifying children and young people at risk

Several recommendations are proposed for the general improvement of the monitoring of the OOSCA and of the children at risk of school dropout in Romania. These include improving the way of recording absenteeism and school dropout (a registration form for absenteeism reasons is also proposed), but also applying an early warning mechanism. The implementation of the automatic alert system for the prevention of school dropout and identification of out-of-school children proposes that SIIR automatically integrate various types of alerts or communication mechanisms, as follows:

Alert 1: If school-age children who are expected to enroll in school this year are not enrolled by a certain date, an alert is sent to the competent entity with the child's data, in order to take action. The implementation of this type of alert implies linking SIIR⁵ to the civil status registry.

Alert 2: If a child who does not have identity documents or his/ her data cannot be extracted from the civil status registry is enrolled in school, an alert is sent to the relevant department within the Ministry of Interior with the pupil's data, in order to take measures.

Alert 3: If a child is absent from school for no excused reason/ without providing an absence certificate, an immediate alert (e.g. by text message) is sent to the parents and the competent school staff (e.g. by e-mail or upon next login to the school's computer system) for the purpose of taking measures.

Alert 4: If a child is absent for a certain period (for example, in the Netherlands if he or she has accumulated at least 16 absences within 4 weeks), an alert is sent to the competent entity (or entities) to analyse the situation. It could also be a means of monitoring "at-risk pupils" before school dropout.⁶

³ <http://www.unicef.ro/publicatii/cadru-de-monitorizare-a-copiiilor-aflati-in-afara-sistemului-de-educatie/>

⁴ Apostu et al. (2012).

⁵ The report proposes the creation of a new computerised data system managed by the Ministry of National Education - SIME.

⁶ The report emphasises that, ideally, the alert is transmitted to a coordinating agency or coordinating person to (i) avoid duplication of actions taken by different institutions, (ii) avoid inaction if one department assumes that another department has

Within the pupil's absence form, a distinction is made between the causes of unexcused absenteeism: i) physical, cognitive, emotional or other disability that makes it difficult to continue the studies; ii) difficulty keeping up with colleagues/poor results or school failure; iii) peer pressure (such as friends who do not go to school/ have dropped out); iv) difficulty in commuting to school; v) inability to afford school costs (including uniform/ clothing, school supplies, etc.); vi) marriage; viii) pregnancy/ birth of a child; ix) discrimination in school; x) work (including formal and informal work, paid and unpaid); xi) lack of interest of the pupil in school; xii) lack of interest of the pupil's family regarding the education of the child; xiii) family problems (such as violence or drug/ alcohol abuse).

Response to early warning signs

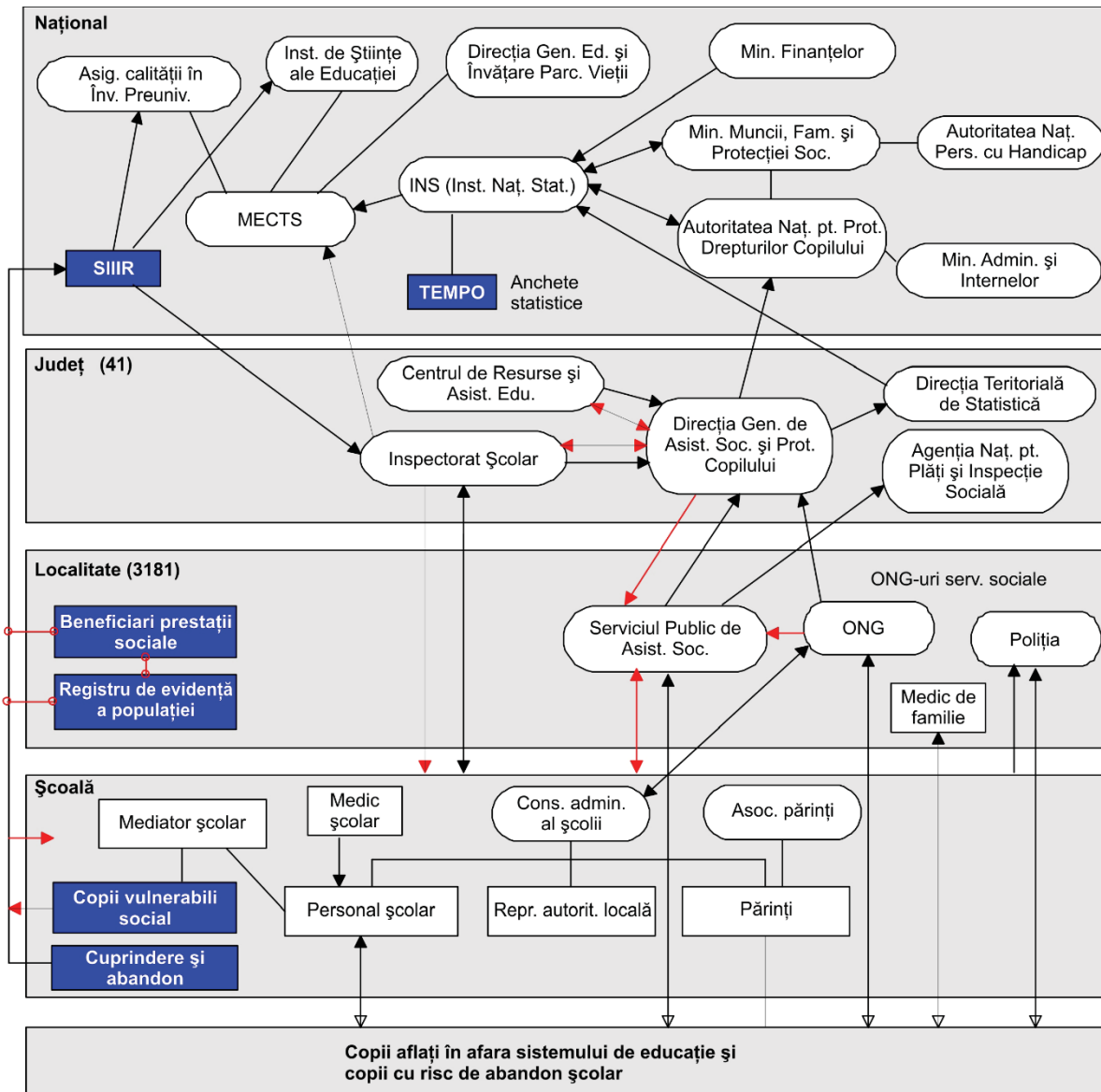
The same form also provides a template for actions taken, classified as follows:

- contacting the parent/ guardian, on the date of;
- contacting the competent government body on the date of... and
- other actions taken or comments.

No further recommendations are provided. The report is focused on analyzing the available databases and optimizing information flows for monitoring out-of-school children and adolescents. In this respect, in order to improve collaboration and exchange of information at cross-sectoral level, another proposal is to create an international (or European) school passport to register school participation of children leaving the country, which would include a multilingual excerpt from SIIR, with the profile and the classes attended by each child, in order to facilitate integration in other European education systems. In conclusion, the report maps the available information and flows and the necessary improvements (represented through red arrows) in order to provide a holistic view on the functioning of monitoring at different levels. The report underlines that the image presented corresponds to the situation in Romania in December 2014 and that it will probably require updates in the dynamic context of the exchange of interinstitutional information.

already taken measures and (iii) coordinate responses when measures are needed from several entities working with children in difficult situations.

Information flows on out-of-school children and children at risk of dropout in Romania



LEGENDĂ

- Legătură organizațională
 - Flux de informații
 - Acțiune
 - Flux de informații propus
 - Propunere metodă de comparare a informațiilor
- Baza de date / Registre**

Source: Van Cappelle and Bell (2016: 29).

Community Services for Children. Social inclusion through the provision of integrated services at community level⁷

This pilot project⁸ aimed to test a model for the provision of integrated community services in 38 urban and rural communities in the Bacău County. The concept of integrated community services was developed following a joint initiative of MLSJ, MONE and MH, with technical assistance from UNICEF. Integration of the services is achieved through coordination between the health, education and social protection services, provided by: the community medical assistant, the social worker and the school counsellor. In localities where there are vulnerable ethnic communities, the local team of professionals is joined by a school mediator and a health mediator.

Early warning signs and methods for identifying children and young people at risk

A software application - AURORA - which allows identification of vulnerabilities and real-time monitoring of service provision was developed as part of the project. The methodology used to develop this instrument was also used in the development of the legal framework which this report refers to - GD 691/2015. The initial needs assessment is carried out by the members of the community teams and is followed by determining the necessary interventions and monitoring the provision of services. According to the mid-term evaluation of the model: “the application proposes a series of services, and the status of their provision is available in real time to all members of the community team. The functionality of the application has been improved based on the feedback received from users. Currently, the application also includes references to normative acts of interest that can be viewed quickly by the members of the community teams. At community level, the application allows aggregation of data on children according to certain criteria such as: domicile, age, gender, types of vulnerability. Based on the information in the application, it is possible to estimate the need for services for each particular community.⁹ The success elements to which AURORA has contributed are: (i) identifying the needs and planning the necessary integrated services; (ii) better understanding of the needs of children and their families by county-level decision-makers; (iii) continuous improvement of AURORA based on the feedback received from the community team members, but also (iv) reactivation of the consultative community structures in some communities.

Response to early warning signs. Two packages are implemented:

(i) Minimum Social Services Package.¹⁰ Through an integrated approach, the community nurse; the social worker and the school counsellor will ensure the provision of a minimum package of services for all children in the community. To support the integrated approach of services at community level, the model aims to: (1) develop a mechanism for early identification of children and families at risk and to prevent risk through integrated interventions; (2) develop inter-sectoral working methodologies at the level of the education, social protection and community health care systems.

⁷ <http://unicef.ro/serviciicomunitarepentrucopii/despre>

⁸ The project is funded by Norway Grant, with the support of the Botnar Foundation, and it is implemented by UNICEF, in partnership with the Bacău County Council, Bacău Prefecture and 38 local public authorities in Bacău county. The active partners in the development and implementation of the model are several line ministries, including the Ministry of Labor, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of National Education among other agencies at central and local level.

⁹ Petrescu (coord.) (2016: 54).

¹⁰ More information available here: <http://unicef.ro/wp-content/uploads/Brosura-pachet-minim-de-servicii.pdf>

(ii) The Inclusive Quality Education Package¹¹ is aimed at: improving the capacity of the school management and the teachers to come to the support of each child, based on their needs; improving teaching methods and tools; building partnerships with students' families and developing parental skills; mobilising communities to support education; improving children's non-cognitive skills and their motivation; encouraging diversity among students, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, religion, (dis)ability and socio-economic status.

The implementation of the two packages has resulted in several types of successes, but also challenges that are broadly presented in the same study of mid-term evaluation of the project.¹² Final project evaluations are not yet available.¹³ Generally, the expected results of this UNICEF project are:

- ✓ Prevention and control of all forms of violence;
- ✓ Registration of all pregnancies and increasing the number of pre-natal checks;
- ✓ Registration of all children in the records of a family doctor;
- ✓ Increasing the level of information of adolescents on the risks related to tobacco, alcohol and drug use;
- ✓ 10% reduction in the number of unexcused absences;
- ✓ Ensuring the availability of integrated community services for 95% of the population.

The campaign “Let's Go to School!” to enhance school participation¹⁴

Project web page:

According to the project presentation site, in mid-2010, UNICEF launched, in partnership with MONE and the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), the campaign entitled “The future of the children starts in school” (subsequently called “Let's go to school!”) with the purpose of bringing children back to school and helping them finish compulsory education. UNICEF's main partners were IES, the County School Inspectorates, the Holt NGOs, CRIPS, the Education 2000+ Centre, Agency Impreuna and the Roma Civic Alliance. The campaign “Let's go to school!” also integrated the project entitled “Priority Education Areas” (PEA) developed by IES beginning in 2002.

Early warning signs and methods for identifying children and young people at risk

The selection is made at community level - the project is rolled out in communities with high rates of dropout and absenteeism. In the first year of implementation (2010/11 school year), the campaign targeted 38 communities with a high rate of school dropout. In the 2011-2012 school year the campaign was extended to 103 other communities with high rates of school dropout. The Working Guide¹⁵ for preventing and combating school dropout addressed to high school principals developed as part of this project, contains a template for children at major risk of school dropout.¹⁶ This template is designed to collect student data and is structured in three main chapters: (i) general student data; (ii) general data on the student's living conditions: number of rooms, connection to utilities - drinking water, gas, sewerage,

¹¹ More information available here: <http://www.unicef.ro/wp-content/uploads/Pachetul-Educatie-Inclusiva-de-Calitate.pdf>

¹² Petrescu (coord.) (2016).

¹³ The minimum service package was implemented until the end of 2018, and the inclusive quality education package until the end of the 2018-2019 school year (Petrescu, coord., 2016: 93).

¹⁴ <https://www.unicef.ro/media/privind-in-trecut-privind-in-viitor/campania-pentru-participarea-scolara-%E2%80%9Ehai-la-scoala/>

¹⁵ UNICEF (2012: 9-11).

¹⁶ The template was carried out by IES as part of the project entitled “Extension of the PEA system in 24 schools”, implemented with the financial support of the UNICEF Representation in Romania.

household equipment, travel time to school, means of transport used; (iii) risk factors - individual, family and school-related factors.

The information contained in the individual files is recorded and saved in a unique database at national level, in which the schools participating in the project can record all the cases considered relevant. A monitoring table is provided concerning students at risk of truancy and school dropout at school level. Table templates are also provided to centralize the situation of students at risk. Also, there is a table concerning student flows during the school year. In connection with the relevant terms and for the EWM scheme, the following definitions are used:

(i) students at risk with a large number of absences are students who attend school, but who have more than 30 unexcused absences during a semester or more than 60 unexcused absences at the end of the current school year;

(ii) the school results of at-risk students: 1. Students who, at the time of the monitoring, are at risk of failing one or more subjects. 2. Students who, at the end of the first semester or at the end of the school year, are failing one or more subjects.

(iii) students who do not attend school: 1. Total number of students at risk who dropped out of school in the current school year (to be filled out for those who dropped out in the first semester and in the second semester): students identified as at risk who dropped out of school in the first and second semester, respectively. 2. At-risk students enrolled in school records who did not attend school at all: identified at-risk students who are enrolled in school records and did not show up for school at all from the beginning of the school year; to be filled out at the end of the first semester and at the end of the school year; this category of students is included in the category of students at risk who have dropped out of school in the current school year (the above category).

(iv) students who avoided school dropout - students identified as at-risk students who attended school throughout the school year (including those with a lot of absences).

Response to early warning signs

The interventions of the project cover three levels:

Family	At family level, parents are involved in the activity of the school, they get counselling to raise awareness on the importance of education and are engaged in activities to develop parental skills.
School	For schools, activities are initiated to develop a school environment that is as child-friendly as possible, including by adapting the pedagogical methods (also) to the children's learning capacity, improving the school's amenities (by providing adequate school supplies and equipment).
Community	At community level, other local professionals are involved - social workers, medical personnel, local authorities. In each priority community, school mediators are selected and trained.

After the first year of project implementation, in about 50% of the schools the dropout rate decreased by 15-40% compared to the rates registered two years before. At the same time, according to the project presentation site, the campaign has had an impact on schools and the community in general, leading to: an increase in the capacity of school principals to prevent and reduce school-related causes of dropout and absenteeism, strengthening of teacher capacity to adapt their teaching methods to the needs of at-risk children, an increase in the capacity of school mediators to apply methods to prevent and reduce dropout and absenteeism, an increase in the awareness of the importance of education among parents and more welcoming and friendly schools, with appropriate teaching equipment and materials.

WORLD VISION

The RESCUE project¹⁷

The RESCUE project - *Reading Early School Leaving Signals* is a strategic partnership project developed by the World Vision Romania Foundation in partnership with the non-governmental organisation National Network for Children from Bulgaria, the company Across Limits from Malta, the non-governmental organization We World Onlus from Italy, UNIVERSITY 'DEGLI STUDI DI BERGAMO - Department of Human and Social Sciences, the Mihai David High School from Negrești, County of Vaslui and the Coșereni High School, from the Coșereni commune, County of Ialomița. The project was carried out over a 36-month period, from September 2016 to August 2019, and has European funding from the Erasmus Plus programme.

Early warning signs and methods for identifying children and young people at risk

The first objective of the project is to establish the first signs and warning patterns of the risk of early school leaving. Unlike the MATE scheme, in which the risks are measured individually, the mechanism developed in this project measures the risk of early school leaving at classroom level. The measurement instrument is built on 4 dimensions: context, family, children and school.

Risk measurement instrument proposed in the RESCUE project

	RISK LEVEL (Dimension)	HIGH LEVEL (Indicators)	LOW LEVEL (Indicators)
Context	The father's level of education	Primary or lower secondary school	High school or higher
	Mother's education level	Primary or lower secondary school	High school or higher
	Economic conditions	20% (or more) of families are below the poverty line	More than 80% of the families are above the poverty line
	The level of employment in the family	20% (or more) of the parents are looking for a job	More than 80% of the parents are employed
	Transport	20% (or more) of the families live 1 hour (or more) away from school	More than 80% of them live less than 1 hour away from school
	Community	Most families have weak links with the local community	Most families have strong links with the local community
The family	Custody	20% (or more) of the children live with their relatives, because their parents are away.	More than 80% of the children live with their parents.
	Emigration	20% (or more) of the children spend time abroad with their parents	More than 80% of the children live continuously in the school area
	Immigration	20% (or more) of the children moved from another country	More than 80% of the children are born in the country
	Migration context	20% (or more) of the parents of the children moved from another country	More than 80% of the parents of the children were born in the country
	Ethnic minority	20% (or more) of the children belong to an ethnic minority	Less than 20% of the children belong to an ethnic minority

¹⁷ www.projectrescue.eu

	RISK LEVEL (Dimension)	HIGH LEVEL (Indicators)	LOW LEVEL (Indicators)
	Structure of the family	10% (or more) of the children live in a single-parent family	More than 90% of the children live in a family with two parents
	Size of the family	10% (or more) of the children have more than 3 siblings	More than 90% of the children have 3 or fewer siblings
	Work	10% (or more) of the children work or are responsible for caring for their family	More than 90% of the children do not work and are not responsible for caring for their family
	Social Assistance Services/ Mental Health Services	10% (or more) of the families of the children are beneficiaries of/ are registered with social services/ mental health services	Over 90% of the families of the children are not registered with social services/ mental health services
	Early marriage/ early pregnancy	Early marriage/ early pregnancy is common in 10% (or more) of the children's families	Early marriage/ pregnancy is common in less than 10% of the children's families
	Violence	10% (or more) of the children's families were affected by domestic violence	Less than 10% of the children's families were affected by domestic violence
Children	Gender	Most of the children in school are boys	Most of the children in school are girls
	Health	10% (or more) of the children suffer from chronic, long-term illness.	More than 90% of the children are normally in good health
	School transfers	10% (or more) of the children are transferred from another school	More than 90% of the children attend the same school from the beginning
	School attendance	The rate of absenteeism is 20% (or more)	The rate of absenteeism is less than 20%
	Repeating the school year	10% (or more) of the children repeated 1 (one) or more school years	Less than 10% of the children repeated the school year
	Language	The national language is the second language for 20% of the children (or more)	The national language is the first language for more than 80% of the children
	Physical disabilities	5% (or more) of the children have a permanent physical condition/ disability	Less than 5% of the children have a permanent physical condition
	Cognitive Disabilities	5% (or more) of the children have mild/ severe cognitive impairment/ disability	Less than 5% of the children have mild/ severe cognitive impairment/ disability
	Learning difficulties	10% (or more) of the children have learning difficulties (e.g. dyslexia)	Less than 10% of the children suffer from learning difficulties
	Conduct	2 (or more) disciplinary sanctions (e.g. written reprimand, suspension) per week within the school	Less than 2 disciplinary sanctions each week within the school
School	Expectations	Expectations for some children are limited	Expectations are high for all children
	Enrolment in the School	The school does not have any information policies/ mobilisation policies for the families	The school seeks to enrol all children in the locality

	RISK LEVEL (Dimension)	HIGH LEVEL (Indicators)	LOW LEVEL (Indicators)
	Obstacles	The obstacles to school participation remain unchanged or are increasing	The obstacles to school participation are reduced
	Physical Environment	The buildings and land exclude participants in certain activities	The buildings and land are developed to support everyone's participation
	Staff/ children	Staff-child relationships are often neglectful or strained	The staff and the children respect each other ^[SEP]
	Staff/ parents/ caregivers	Staff-child relationships and parent-caregiver relationships are often neglectful or strained	Staff and parents/ caregivers work together
	Staff/ management	The staff and the management are often inattentive or tense	The staff and the management work well together ^[SEP]
	Staff/ community	The school and the local communities omit/ neglect each other.	The school and the local communities are developing each other
	Resources	The staff develops individual plans to support learning and to prevent early school leaving	The staff develops common resources to support learning and prevent early school leaving
	Participation	The learning activities encourage the participation of some children more than others	The learning activities encourage the participation of all children
	Planning	The learning activities are planned with a "typical child" in mind	The learning activities are planned with all children in mind.
	Evaluation	The evaluation primarily encourages competition and selection	The evaluations encourage the achievements of all children
	Support/ assistance	The forms of support are rarely interlinked	All forms of support are coordinated
	Professional development	Professional development activities are rarely focused on early school leaving	Professional development activities help staff respond to early school leaving ^[SEP]
	New staff orientation	New staff must find their own way of settling/ integrating in the school	All new staff is assisted with settling/ integrating in the school
	Transfer of personnel	The annual turnover of the personnel is more than 20%	The annual turnover of the personnel is less than 20%
	Cooperation	Children work mostly individually	Children learn from each other
	Motivation	Classes are mainly carried out through lectures	Children are actively involved in their own learning
	Policies for special educational requirements	The policies regarding special educational requirements and disabilities are based on diagnostic labels	The school ensures that the policies regarding special educational requirements and disabilities support inclusion
	Language support	The school does not appreciate the multilingual skills of non-native speakers	Language support for non-native speakers is a resource for the entire school
	Public care services	The school does not provide specific support for children in public care	The school supports education continuity for children in public care

	RISK LEVEL (Dimension)	HIGH LEVEL (Indicators)	LOW LEVEL (Indicators)
	Discrimination	Discrimination and prejudice are not regarded as a school problem	The school controls all forms of discrimination
	Behavioural policies	The behavioural policy is administered by the teaching staff and by the school teachers, on a case-by-case basis.	The behavioural policy is related to the development of learning and of the curriculum
	Discipline	Disciplinary measures are seen as an unpleasant, but unavoidable task	There is limited pressure for disciplinary exclusion
	Continuity of communication: school - home	The life of the children at home is considered a matter of confidentiality, separate from school	The staff links what is happening at school with the lives of the children at home
	Health	Health is considered, in essence, the area of intervention of healthcare	The school contributes to the health of children and adults
	Wellbeing Welfare	The school favours achievement through competition as a rule.	The school encourages children and adults to feel good about themselves. ^[SEP]

Source: projectrescue.eu/ro/questionnaire/

Response to early warning signs

Other objectives of the project are aimed at developing the skills of the teachers to prevent ESL and at improving the cooperation and communication between school and community. Teachers are trained on classifying ESL-related issues and on choosing those that can be effectively addressed at school level as well as on directing others towards the community. The events will be organized within the community. The teachers apply the warning mechanism, and the field experts will assist the teachers in the effective planning and implementation of ESL prevention actions. The teachers will apply the set of tools in their own schools in cooperation with the students, together with the other teachers who teach classes for the same student, the management of the school and the parents. The teachers will:

- check for ESL warning signs according to the checklist;
- carry out an analysis of the educational needs of the students;
- identify students at risk of ESL;
- issue personalized intervention plans;
- enter the information in a database with the problems faced by students at risk of ESL;
- classify ESL problems and choose those that can be addressed effectively at school level and will direct the others to the community level.

In order to improve cooperation between the school and the community, quantitative performance indicators are considered, such as the number of institutional/ individual decision-makers in the community involved in the project, the number of cooperation protocols for the prevention of ESL at the community level. The school initiates action plans and measures in collaboration with the community, based on the indicators in the Inclusion Index.¹⁸ This index is composed of several dimensions aimed at:

- (1) Developing an inclusive culture through community development and establishing inclusive values;
- (2) Developing inclusive policies by developing the school for all and organizing support for diversity;

¹⁸ More information is available here: http://www.indexforinclusion.org/indicators_1.php

(3) Developing inclusive practices by building the curriculum for all and organizing learning (including by planning learning activities with all children in the plan).

In conclusion, the overall idea of the project is in accordance with the MATE scheme, by creating a mechanism for the prevention of ESL and community-based intervention, including by setting up 6 community-based multidisciplinary task force groups.

Bread for Tomorrow

The “Bread for Tomorrow” (“Paine si Maine”) project, implemented by World Vision with the support of Lidl Romania, offers after school activities to children from disadvantaged areas - villages from the counties of Dolj, Vâlcea and Vaslui. The project presentation¹⁹ site refers to a number of 1,256 children from 29 disadvantaged villages where the program is currently operating.

Early warning signs and methods for identifying children and young people at risk

The programme operates at community level, in disadvantaged villages, and it involves all children from the villages identified. Therefore, there is no early warning mechanism regarding the risk of early school leaving - neither at individual level, nor at classroom level. However, the general vulnerability of the community (at village level) in which the project operates is considered.

Response to early warning signs

The programme offers a warm meal and help with homework and getting involved in other educational activities, under the guidance of a teacher. The project presentation site also mentions donations of food packages during the summer and organizing of other educational programmes, such as excursions and summer schools involving students, parents and family. Also, from the donations made by Lidl Romania, age-appropriate personalized gifts are provided to the children. According to the representatives of World Vision, the efficiency of “SCHOOL AFTER SCHOOL” activities increases substantially when the services of a psychologist are provided (as in the case of a European funded project currently implemented by World Vision) and/or when activities such as “school for parent” are also included. In general, “SCHOOL AFTER SCHOOL” projects implemented by World Vision include: a warm meal; one hour of play for children (to help develop social and behavioral skills), and lessons with educators. The cost required to help support a child in the Bread for Tomorrow project are 270 lei per month, which covers the cost of a full lunch and the “SCHOOL AFTER SCHOOL” classes (83%), as well as the project administration costs (17%).

The Choose school projects

The World Vision Foundation has implemented and is implementing a series of “Choose school” projects, funded through EU funds:

- HCOP²⁰**
- (1) Choose School - quality education, future in the community!**
 - (2) Choose School - a chance for the future!
 - (3) Choose School!
 - (4) Communities involved, quality education
 - (5) School for all - access to quality education for preschoolers, pupils and teachers in the North-Western Region

¹⁹ Date accessed: 7 July 2019.

²⁰ Priority Axis 6, funding priority “Reducing and preventing early school leaving”. See Annex 1.2 section (9). The current list of HCOP projects includes both the partnership leader and the implementation partners.

HRDOP²¹ Choose School in the Western, South-West Oltenia and North-Western development regions!
Choose School!

The implementation partners of the HCOP projects include: The School Inspectorate of the County of Cluj, Sînpaul Commune (for the project implemented in the North Western Region) and the Romanian Patriarchate for the three projects mentioned above – “Choose School”.

Early warning signs and methods for identifying children and young people at risk

In general, World Vision projects with this purpose are aimed at children at educational risk, those living in poverty or from families in difficulty.²²

Children are identified through the World Vision network of social workers who have been working for a long time in the communities targeted by the projects.

Response to early warning signs

The project entitled “Choose School - quality education, future in the community”²³ will provide the delivery of integrated services, focused on the educational needs of children from vulnerable groups identified in the four partner schools, from the counties of Dolj and Vaslui. The target group of the project is represented by 691 ante-preschoolers, preschoolers and school children in primary and lower secondary education and their parents. The activities include:

- implementation of a friendly kindergarten model,
- “SCHOOL AFTER SCHOOL” activities for primary and lower secondary school children, as well
- other activities, such as summer schools, summer kindergartens, Sunday schools, theme clubs, excursions and educational camps.

Similar to the other projects, but also to the general ideas promoted within the MATE scheme, the project entitled “Choose School - a chance for the future!”²⁴ takes an integrated approach to risk of school dropout, as it proposes measures to prevent early school leaving by identifying the individual risks and obstacles of each student beneficiary and undertaking a personalized intervention for each case. The purpose of the project is to prevent early school leaving for 1,010 pre-schoolers, school-aged children and vulnerable adults from 5 rural communities in the county of Vâlcea, namely: Mihăești, Bujoreni, Drăgoești, Frâncești and Dănicei. The activities of the project include catechetical work within the “Sunday School”, creation camps, a creativity competition, train the trainer courses, and a wide variety of extracurricular activities.

²¹ Priority Axis 2, Area of Intervention 2.2. See Annex 1.2 section (8). The list of HRDOP projects does not include the implementation partners, although the projects identified are only those that have been implemented by World Vision as the main applicant.

²² The “Choose School” Project financed through HRDOP also addressed children at increased risk of criminality. More information is available at: <https://worldvision.ro/alege-scoala>

²³ More information is available at: <https://blog.worldvision.ro/proiectul-alege-scoala-educatie-de-calitate-viitor-in-comunitate-le-a-implinit-copii-lor-dorinta-de-a-avea-ghiozdane-noi-echipate-pentru-scoala/>

²⁴ More information is available at: <https://worldvision.ro/Presa/2018/proiectul-alege-scoala-o-sansa-pentru-viitor-in-judetul-valcea-a882.html>

SAVE THE CHILDREN

School dropout prevention programs & School integration/reintegration programs²⁵

Save the Children is implementing three major types of programs in the education area:

- ✓ Summer kindergarten programs
- ✓ School after school programs
- ✓ Second chance programs

Until now, Save the Children Romania has included in its educational programs 37,065 children, as follows: (i) 7,905 children received support under the Summer Kindergarten Program; (ii) 24,992 children received support under the school dropout prevention program School after school; (iii) 4,168 children were reintegrated through the Second Chance program.

The education programs are funded through EU programs (HCOP and SOPHRD), donations and sponsorships (the Christmas Trees Festival, but also support from private companies like Catena, H&M, Conscious Foundation, Kaufland, Lidl), from the state budget (Ministry of Labor and Social Justice, in virtue of Law no 34/1998 on granting subsidies to Romanian associations and foundations with legal entity that are setting-up and managing social assistance units, as subsequently amended).

HCOP ²⁶	An equal opportunity for all. Inclusive education in schools ²⁷ – providing integrated measures for reducing and preventing early school leaving for 1180 children from disadvantaged communities in Iasi, Bacau and Vaslui Școala DA – providing an integrated package of psycho-socio-educational services for 430 children and developing the teachers` professional competences I also want to go to school! - It aims at providing integrated prevention, intervention and compensation services for children/young people from the following vulnerable groups: children from disadvantaged communities, Roma children, children whose parents are abroad for work, children from low income families. A future through school! - It aims at providing integrated prevention, intervention and compensation services for children/young people from the following vulnerable groups: children from disadvantaged communities, Roma children, children whose parents are abroad for work, children from low income families. PACT - Active partnership for quality and knowledge transfer in the school communities from Botosani and Suceava ²⁸ - providing integrated measures for reducing and preventing early school leaving and promoting equal access to quality preschool, primary and secondary education, including to formal, non-formal and informal education paths for 2,485 children from disadvantaged communities in the counties of Botosani and Suceava.
SOPHRD ²⁹	Integrated educational centers for vulnerable groups - with the three types of activities, together with teacher training activities and social information and counseling for children about educational alternatives Roma children are getting ready for kindergarten Guidance and resource centers for inclusive education - Complex education services for preventing and mitigating school dropout

²⁵ <https://www.salvaticopiii.ro/ce-facem/educatie>

²⁶ Priority Axis 6, funding priority Reducing and preventing Early school leaving. See Annex 1.2 section (9).

²⁷ The Partnership Leader for the project is ADIE - Euronest Intercommunity Development Association.

²⁸ The Partnership Leader for the project is ADIE - Euronest Intercommunity Development Association.

²⁹ Priority Axis 2, Key Area of Intervention 2.2 See Annex 1.2 section (8).

Early warning signals and identification methods for at-risk children and youngsters

The projects are implemented in disadvantaged communities, either in the urban area (School after school programs are mostly implemented in urban) or in the rural areas (the Summer kindergarten program is mostly implemented in the rural area). Case referrals for program inclusion are done mostly through the social workers network of the Save the Children organization. Given the fame of the organization's programs, case referrals are also being done by other stakeholders in the community. For example, children who under the information campaign understood their rights can act as referral tools for other at-risk children -"go and take this one, too, because he's looking after the animals and has no right to education".

Responses to early warning signals

Programs like summer kindergartens are useful to prevent dropout in primary and lower secondary. As a general rule, summer bridge programs like summer schools or kindergartens facilitate transition from one educational cycle to another and create a fostering environment, by implementing several extracurricular activities designed to make the school more attractive to kids. The programs are rolled out before the school year starts and they also include a kindergarten teacher training component. The outcomes were better when the program included also the parents of vulnerable children enrolled for one day, they took part in all kindergarten activities. The results of the impact assessment for the past 5 years of the program show that 93% of the children that received these services are in school, 2.39% are out of the mainstream education system and 4.78% are abroad, as a result of the parents' financial migration.³⁰ School after school programs, rolled out in educational institutions like those funded from EU funds, are aimed at preventing school dropout for children from vulnerable groups. Under the program, children are supported by specialized teachers to do their homework, they get extra tutoring and are encouraged to take part in leisure activities aimed at developing independent living skills. At the same time, social and psychological services and legal aid are being provided for children and their parents/caretakers, as well as financial support for the children and their families.

The Second chance programs are implemented jointly with schools and target children/youngsters who have dropped out or who have never attended school. Part of the programs are delivered through the organization's educational centers. Apart from the extra tutoring, social and legal services are being provided for children and their families. Moreover, depending on the needs identified, children/youngsters also receive financial support (school supplies, food, hygiene and sanitary products).

³⁰ Source: <https://www.salvaticopiii.ro/ce-facem/educatie/educatie-prescolara>

CHILD HELPLINE

Integrated measures for better access to education for children from disadvantaged schools³¹

Project website:

This is an on-going project (August 2018 - April 2021), funded from OPHC (SMIS code: 106615) and is being implemented by the Telefonul Copilului Association, in partnership with the Arad County School Inspectorate, Teaching Staff Resource Center Alexandru Grava Arad and the County Center for Educational Resources and Assistance Arad.

The main objective of the project is to ensure access to quality education for 388 children enrolled in 4 disadvantaged schools in Arad county. The project also includes involving 400 parents in the children's education, by developing specific activities.

Early warning signals and identification methods for at-risk children and youngsters

In order to identify the project target group, similar indicators are used for number of absences and poor school outcomes, based on the HCOP. The sheet was sent to the CSI, which centralized all information at county level. The information on the children's families was gathered by municipalities and other partners. The CSI selected the target group, together with the school principals.

Answers to early warning signals

The package of integrated measures provided under the project includes:

- ✓ Healthy lifestyle promotion campaign - including the provision of some medical services, packages of vitamins and minerals and personal hygiene packages for 2 school years as well as organizing demo workshops, cleaning activities, creative recycling and reconditioning, healthy food and seminars to promote the parents' business ideas.
- ✓ Information, counseling, guidance and monitoring activities to observe the right to education (an operational call center for the target group offering, with the help of professionals, information, psychological counseling, legal advice, guidance and facilitation in respect to the authorities' intervention).
- ✓ Creating a multimedia area in each of the 4 schools (purchasing new media and audio-video equipment for the schools).
- ✓ Information, recruitment, selection and progress monitoring for the target group – selection of participating children and parents and tailored educational plans drafted and monitored.
- ✓ Support to close the knowledge gaps and to move on to the next school year; a snack for students on the days when they are participating in the activities and a 2-hour per day additional support for homework and understanding the notions taught during that day (students are organized in groups of maximum 12).
- ✓ Support to adapt to the national curriculum requirements (provide a snack and additional educational support during the summer breaks).

The development of a strategy for teacher development and monitoring its implementation entails several activities:

- (i) conduct a diagnosis of the teacher training, recruitment and selection needs;
- (ii) roll out the program "We reward high performances" - reward teachers based on performance criteria;
- (iii) Involve parents in children's education (parental education programs, support for parents provided by a multidisciplinary team (teachers, psychologists, speech therapists, school counselors), information letters

³¹<https://ccdar.ro/pocu-id-106615-masuri-integrate-de-imbunatatire-a-accesului-la-educatie-al-copiiilor-din-scoli-defavorizate/>

for parents presenting information about the activities the child is involved in, results, progress achieved and recommendations, inviting parents to participate in school events, open classes, watching educational materials in multimedia centers;

(iv) developing continuous training programs and having them accredited by the MoE - "Active learning and performance management in preschool and primary education", "Active learning and performance management in lower secondary education" and "Parental educator";

(v) rolling out programs aimed at developing cross-cutting skills for teachers;

(vi) exchange visits and support for implementing educational projects (the exchanges are structured into 4 workshops, as follows: "Integrating ITC and the audio-video and new media resources into the education process", "Innovative educational techniques", "Conflict management in the school environment", "Dramatic and playful methods in the educational process") and

(vii) developing the students` abilities to apply, analyze and interpret the knowledge acquired through extracurricular activities - learning opportunities in the nonformal environment, capitalizing the children`s artistic potential, giving them opportunities to express themselves freely and to interact with adults in different contexts, personal development activities, safety, sports, health, activities for democratic citizenship and civic responsibility, trips and learning about the cultural heritage;

(viii) psychological assessment of the development, psychological counseling, speech therapy and school/professional guidance (annual psychological assessment for all children covered by the project, developing tailored educational plans and support schemes for parents).

ROMA EDUCATION FUND

The project *Roma children and parents want to go to school*³²

This project was funded through SOPHRD (SMIS code: 50616) and implemented between April 2014 - August 2015 by Roma Education Fund Romania, in partnership with the Resource Center for Roma Communities and Roma Oktatasi Alap, transnational partner. The project had the following specific objectives:

- ✓ Provide access to education for 310 Roma adults from the Center, North East and South Muntenia regions who have not completed compulsory education (they completed primary education, but not secondary) by delivering the "Second Chance" program, as well as an integrated package of guidance and counseling services and subsidies.
- ✓ Ensure fair access to education for 800 Roma students from 5th-8th grades, at risk of ESL, from the Center, North East and South Muntenia regions, by providing an integrated package of mentoring, guidance and counseling services, additional educational support and subsidies.
- ✓ Develop the competences of 220 people from the Center, North East and South Muntenia regions, involved in implementing ESL prevention and mitigation measures for Roma people.

Early warning signals and identification methods for at-risk children and youngsters

The target group for the second specific objective comprised about 800 vulnerable students from the 5th-8th grades, at risk of ESL, from the Center, North East and South Muntenia regions, by providing an integrated package of mentoring, guidance and counseling services, additional educational support and subsidies. The study³³ conducted under this SOPHRD project analyzes the situation of Roma children from the following dimensions: (i) at family level - poor families, that don't have the financial resources needed for school education, with a poor educational background; (ii) at school level - school conditions enabling inequalities, discrimination, school segregation, provision of poor quality education services, an unfriendly environment for vulnerable children (especially Roma).

Answers to early warning signals

In virtue of the project specific objectives, the following activities were provided:

- (i) the "Second Chance" program, together with a package of integrated guidance and counseling services and subsidies;
- (ii) intensive education support package: integrated mentoring, guidance and counseling services, additional educational support and subsidies;
- (iii) develop the competences of 220 people involved in implementing ESL prevention and mitigation measures for Roma people.

The intensive educational support package (provided under the project) comprised the following:³⁴

- A. Providing intensive additional educational support (IES) through tutoring sessions in Romanian and Math (two tutoring sessions in each of the subjects mentioned, per month);
- B. Giving out a snack during the IES sessions;
- C. Counseling and guidance for choosing a right educational and professional path;
- D. Individual and group mentoring, in view of increasing motivation, self-esteem and how one interacts with others, but also developing life skills and for personal development.

³² <https://romaeducationfund.ro/copiii-si-parintii-romi-vor-la-scoala/>

³³ Ivan and Rostaş (2015).

³⁴ Ivan and Rostaş (2015).

E. Individual and group activities with the parents of mentored children, that stimulate their involvement into the kids' education, making them more accountable for it;

F. Subsidies for students (scholarships), with three types of scholarships granted: a) Education scholarships, for all beneficiaries of the intensive educational support program; b) Progress scholarships, given after assessing the progress achieved at the end of each of the 2 school semesters. The progress scholarships were given to the first 400 students who proved an improvement in their school attendance, academic progress and personal development. c) Excellence scholarships were awarded to the students that ranked in the first 200 by their annual general averages. The research carried out on the second wave of the study assessed the impact of the Intensive Educational Support (IES) intervention on the short-term, about 8 months after the implementation. By doing a benchmark with a control group of non-beneficiaries, the study reveals that the Math outcomes of beneficiaries dramatically changed after 8 months of interventions under the Intensive Educational Support package. Math competences of vulnerable students included in the project exceeded the average competences of students from the schools covered by the project.

The project on *Integrated educational services for Roma communities*³⁵ and the project on *Equal opportunities in education for an inclusive society*³⁶

Both projects were funded through HRDOP (SMIS codes: 53006 and 22132 respectively).

The project entitled *Integrated educational services for Roma communities* was implemented between April 2014 - August 2015, by the Roma Education Fund Romania, in partnership with the Community Development Agency Together and Roma Oktatasi Alap (Roma Education Fund), a transnational partner. The specific objectives of this project are similar to the aforementioned project - Roma children and parents want to go to school and it aims at four main components: (i) intensive educational support (additional training sessions in Romanian and Mathematics) together with integrated mentoring and scholarship services and (ii) the Second Chance programme as a support and assistance programme for young people/ adults with a background of social exclusion.

As part of the second project - *Equal opportunities in education for an inclusive society* a study was carried out on the topic of Early school leaving - causes and effects.³⁷ The implementation partners of this project were the Ministry of Education, Research and Innovation, the Foundation "Resource Centre for Roma Communities" - Centre Region, the "Amare Rromentza" Roma Centre, the Association "Centre for Education and Social Development" and the Roma Education Fund.³⁸ The specific objectives of this project were: (i) to ensure equal access to education for a number of 1,250 Roma students in grades V-VIII at risk of early school leaving, by providing financial support and mentoring services in order to keep them in school and to improve their educational results and (ii) to increase opportunities to access secondary education for 750 students of the 7th and 8th grades, through the development and implementation of mentoring, guidance and counselling services, additional educational support, implemented based on their specific affinities and needs, with the purpose of making fully informed choices concerning their educational and professional development.

³⁵ <http://sprijineducationalintensiv.ro/>

³⁶ <https://romaeducationfund.ro/parasirea-timpurie-a-scolii-cauze-si-efecte2/>

³⁷ Ivan and Rostaş (2013).

³⁸ Source: <http://www.scoalavarbilau.ro/proiectul-oportunitati-egale-in-educatie-pentru-o-societate-incluziva/>

Early warning signals and methods for identifying children and young people at risk

The study entitled³⁹ *Early school leaving - causes and effects* was conducted in schools in the Centre, North-Eastern and South Muntenia regions of Romania, which include lower secondary education (grades V-VIII) and where the share of Roma children is of at least 5-10%. The target population of the study included: (i) Roma students and their parents; (ii) for comparison, non-Roma students (and their parents) and (iii) students who left school early (did not attend the last 4 weeks prior to the study)/ or with at least 20 unexcused absences (respectively their parents). Roma people were identified using the hetero-identification of Roma students, with the support of the teachers.

Response to early warning signals

The summary⁴⁰ of the main conclusions and recommendations of the study shows that:

- ✓ Schools have profoundly unequal results for potential beneficiaries, both in terms of school attendance (dropout) and in terms of school performance (gain from receiving educational services).
- ✓ A Roma child is six times more likely to drop out of school than a non-Roma child.
- ✓ The pleasure of going to school (perceiving school as a place where students enjoy going) was the strongest factor influencing school dropout and school performance.
- ✓ The evaluation of the school performance in the classroom is more generous than the national assessment through the standardized tests at the end of the eighth grade, but they are correlated.
- ✓ The transition from the eighth grade to high school is difficult. There is a significantly higher dropout rate in the 9th grade compared to the lower secondary school.
- ✓ Non-participation in the national assessment increased sharply in 2012 with the introduction of video surveillance of the examination. There was another increase in non-participation in 2013. In addition, the rate of promotion for the national assessment provides public decision makers with inaccurate feedback on the performance of young people, because it excludes from statistics those who do not participate in this test even though they were enrolled in the eighth grade.

³⁹ Ivan and Rostaş (2013).

⁴⁰ Ivan and Rostas (2013a: 14).

TEACH FOR ROMANIA

According to the organization's presentation site, Teach for Romania is a non-governmental organization, part of the global Teach for All network, which seeks and prepares valuable people, with or without previous teaching experience, to become teachers in state education, for children from vulnerable environments. The programme, originally developed in 1990 by Teach for America in the United States, attracts top graduates who would not normally regard teaching as a career option. The model operates internationally, in 32 other countries.

Early warning signals and methods for identifying children and young people at risk

The geographical coverage of the programme includes the counties of Braşov, Argeş, Galaţi, Constanţa, Călăraşi, Ialomiţa, Ilfov. The proximity of the county to Bucharest is a condition for mentors, tutors or coordinators to reach the teachers in the programme quickly. Included in the programme are disadvantaged communities from rural and peri-urban areas, the last two grades from the index of educational disadvantage by school. There are several training modules for the applicants selected in the programme.

For the part aimed at school dropout, an observation sheet is used which is based on risk factors previously identified in projects carried out by UNICEF Romania. Based on this fact sheet, teachers in the programme monitor the risk factors, through direct observation and through family visits. There is no structured mechanism for working with the family/ children. It is highly dependent on the initiative of each participant in the programme. Instead, there is an online forum in which programme participants can share their experiences. However, because the experiences of the teachers are strongly context-dependent, there is a risk that what was successful in one place may not be as effective in another community.

In addition, within the central organisation in Bucharest there is a dedicated person who works with institutions of all types - both at central and county level. This person supports the participants in their relationship with the institutions. If the teachers in the programme identify cases of violence, they are notified to the County School Inspectorate.

Response to early warning signals

The activities included in the Teach for Romania programmes include:

- ✓ Recruitment and selection. According to the presentation page of the programme, Teach for Romania rigorously recruits the most talented and motivated Romanians, helping them to become aware of the impact they can have by choosing to become teachers. Candidates are evaluated, among others, based on their academic performance, their involvement in extracurricular activities, their demonstrated *leadership* potential, their motivation and dedication to teach, their perseverance and critical thinking. Those applying on a CV basis are not necessarily teachers, they can also be actors or employees in multinationals who want to become part of the programme.
- ✓ Permanent training, support and counselling. Before being assigned to schools (based on the national examination), Teach for Romania teachers participate in the Leadership and Pedagogy Academy, an intensive six-week training session. As part of this training, the participants acquire the skills necessary to become successful teachers in the classroom and to facilitate student performance.
- ✓ The programme benefits from a standardised assessment, carried out twice a year, which is, in fact, an assessment of the children's skills at the beginning and at the end of each year. At the same time, participants in the programme are observed by coordinating tutors who offer them support during the programme. The programme lasts for two years, so every year there is an overlap

between the "old" and "new" generations of participants. Each tutor has on average 14 teachers assigned to them. Visits to the classroom are carried out once or twice a semester (mobile team of tutors).

- ✓ The Teach for Romania programme involves two years of teaching in a partner school. During the two years, teachers are constantly supported and advised by a team of tutors and benefit from continuous professional development and involvement in a very competitive performance evaluation system.
- ✓ Integration in schools - two years. Teachers are employed full-time in schools selected by Teach for Romania as disadvantaged, schools with poor results, Roma communities, etc., with considerable development potential and which require teachers eager to produce positive transformations. The teachers are evaluated according to the progress of the students in the classes they teach and based on their impact in the community. The programme promotes several models to create a child-friendly school environment. For example, teachers get involved by attracting shoe donations, by starting a music band with the children to help bring them to school, by setting up a tribal class to create a safe space in which to teach the children. Also, participants in the programme receive a modest scholarship from them to cover transportation expenses and teaching materials.
- ✓ At the end of the two years, Teach for Romania teachers have the opportunity to continue their activity in the formal education system as teachers or to migrate to related areas from where they can support the reform of the Romanian education system (entrepreneurs in education, school administration, business). They are advised and assisted in building a career (professional branding) with the help of partner organisations and the Teach for Romania team. They also become part of the global Teach network and benefit from the synergies brought about by belonging to a global education network. In total, in July 2019, in Romania there were 100 alumni (graduates) of the programme and 80 teachers involved.