



**NATIONAL RESEARCH
ON NEEDS, GAPS, AND GOOD PRACTICES
IN THE FIELD OF ESL PREVENTION
IN ITALY**

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Project ENABLE aims at developing an innovative ICT-based methodological approach in supporting the Early School Leaving (ESL) prevention.

The project objectives are:

- a) Fostering students in developing and managing informal skills needed for their educational and professional career;
- b) Contributing to the recognition and validation of informal skills;
- c) Increasing students' awareness and responsibility in planning and achieving their own educational goals;
- d) Supporting the building of solid bridges between the world of work and education;
- e) Promoting and improving a critical and effective use of e-Learning technology within educational environment.

The Project starts with a transnational research. The current document represents the results of this research, being one of the project key outcomes.

This *Transnational Needs Analysis Report on ESL* identifies the concrete problems and challenges, as well as the main career-oriented soft skills and competences required by the job markets in the participating countries. It also provides examples of good practices on ESL in the partner countries.

2. SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS IN NATIONAL CONTEXT OF THE PARTNER COUNTRY

Ten years of school reforms and the strong decentralization in educational and vocational training subjects to Regions, have generated different policy outcomes.

Italian early school leavers come mainly from poor, socially disadvantaged and or low education backgrounds, disadvantaged or migrant minorities. They belong to vulnerable groups, such as persons with physical and mental disabilities or other special educational needs (SEN). Furthermore, they have had a history of disengagement from school, long-term absenteeism, truancy or expulsion. For example, in Italy more than 40% of migrants are early school leavers.

A 'whole school approach' to early school leaving is necessary: it should involve school leaders, teaching and non-teaching staff, learners, parents and families, with strong cooperation with external stakeholders and the community, in order to respond adequately to new and complex challenges schools are facing, linked to the increasing diversity in society.

The adoption of mobile technologies by educational institutions is a slow and regulated process, easily manageable and ruled, while the introduction of mobile devices into the classrooms by students is the cause of many discussions: for this reason, ICT teaching is still not common in Italy.

2.1 DEFINITION OF ESL

The Italian definition of *Early School Leaving* is mainly centred on *drop-out*, without providing a precise definition of the phenomenon.

The term *Early Leaving from Education and Training* (ELET) has been introduced at EU level to indicate 18-24 year-old people with only lower secondary education or less who are no longer in education or training¹.

Early school leavers are therefore those who have only achieved pre-primary, primary, lower secondary or a short upper secondary education of less than 2 years, and include those who have only a pre-vocational or vocational education which did not lead to an upper secondary certification. While the term "early school leaving" includes all forms of leaving education and training, the term "school drop-out" refers to a discontinued ongoing vocational or training course.

Since 2000, the Italian Ministry of Education, instead, has included ESL and drop-out under the concept of *school dispersion* defined as "a set of phenomena that involves a slowdown in the formal course of study; failures of compulsory education; exits in progress or end of the year in the different degrees of compulsory education or post-compulsory, before reaching the qualification"².

This definition of ESL includes therefore also the phenomena of irregularities and school failure, considering as indicators repetition rate and the rate of delay, the rates of non-admission and admission with a formative debt.

¹European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Cedefop, 2014. Tackling Early Leaving from Education and Training in Europe: Strategies, Policies and Measures. Eurydice and Cedefop Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

² Survey XVII LEGISLATURA — VII COMMISSIONE — SEDUTA DEL 21 OTTOBRE 2014

In June 2013 the Italian Ministry of Education focuses exclusively on the detection of the *dropout* phenomenon which is understood and measured as “the difference between the initial data of pupils and that relating to pupils who are counted at the end of each school year”³. This interpretation is due to the establishment of the Registry National Student (ANS) of the Ministry of Education that aims to contrast the ESL in a “preventive” logic.

In fact, each school updates and changes at any time the status of the student, accessing the information system of the Ministry of Education (SIDI). The school shows the motivation (transfer abroad, transfer to another school, transition to vocational education and training, parental education) with reference to the notice of the interruption frequency. The system shows what is called “risk of dropping out”, when the interruption is not covered by a formal communication by the students or the family.

This is therefore a phenomenon that records only partially the concept of ESL, as defined at EU level, because it focuses on a different target (students enrolled in school) that, at some point in their school career, interrupts studies but do not give formal communication. This definition, at the moment, in the absence of integration with regional registers of students, excludes the possibility of understanding whether the student who is out of the education and training system monitored by the Ministry of Education, or has enrolled in another vocational training programme managed by regional authorities.

This method of detection, which formalizes a definition of ESL which coincides with the phenomenon of school drop-out, leads to statistical results strongly different and lower from those resulting from the adoption **of EU definition**.

³ Focus “The Early School Leaving”, Ministry of Education - Office of Statistics, June 2013

It should also be mentioned the target set by the European Commission to reduce the early school leaving. The Lisbon Strategy fixed the same goal for all European countries: 10% reduction in the rate of non-completion of secondary school.

The failure to achieve the goals identified for 2010, has prompted the European Commission to review the objectives of the Lisbon Strategy which have been translated into national targets, to allow Member States to tailor interventions compared with their specificities and to enable those countries far from what is indicated by the EU, it was decided to program intermediate goals.

In the case of Italy, the fourth overall objective (The school dropout rate is to be reduced to below 10% and the percentage of the 30 to 34 year olds who have completed a tertiary education is to be increased to at least 40%) is 15-16%, which should correspond to a rate equal to 26-27% of graduates⁴.

⁴ European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Cedefop, 2014. Tackling Early Leaving from Education and Training in Europe: Strategies, Policies and Measures. Eurydice and Cedefop Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

2.2 STATISTICS ON ESL

Statistical measurement - As already mentioned, different definitions of ESL (at European and National level) lead to the adoption of different methodologies in detecting and measuring the consistency of this phenomenon.

For the Italian context, the difficulties of statistical measurement about school dropouts “are related to the overlapping of different training worlds: that of school, that of vocational training and that of workplace”⁵.

Considering the definition of ESL for our country, as mentioned in the previous section, it can be said that there are two dimensions of analysis of the phenomenon: the first coincides with concept of “dropout” and which is detected periodically by MIUR; the second one instead, is related to the European definition of ESL and is “measured” by ISTAT (National Statistics Institute) using the “Labour Force Survey”.

At present there are different detection and monitoring systems on ESL:

- A national system established by the Ministry of Education with the processing of data on school careers, training and apprenticeship of individual students, from the first year of primary school;
- The regional registry systems that will accompany the students along their pathways, both at school and in vocational training.

⁵ Ministry of Education, Directorate General Studies and Planning, Office of Statistics, the Early School Leaving, Basic indicators for the analysis of the phenomenon, School Year 2004/05, December 2006

The law n. 221/2012 (“Urgent measures for the growth of the Country”) has required an acceleration in the process of integration of the registers, allowing Regions and Local Authorities to access the National Register of Students (at the Ministry of Education).

However, it is not yet completed the integration of Ministry of Education Registry with municipal and regional registers, that contain the paths of education and vocational training and apprenticeship.

At the moment, the National Register of Students is the only national system of registry existent, usable by the various subjects described in the decree n. 76/2005 (the municipality where young people, subject to compulsory education, are resident, managers of the school or the head of the educational institution at which students - obliged to fulfill the right/duty to education - are registered or have applied for enrollment; Province, through the Employment Services) but not yet integrated with the regional registers.

This detection system is not fully reliable because the lack of integration with the regional systems does not allow, for example, to assess the results of the training.

The measurement of the phenomenon of the dispersion takes place at the national level, even using the Labour Force Survey (ISTAT). This Survey plays an important role in the estimation of the main aggregates of the labor supply. In addition to information on the aspects related to the labor market, the survey also allows to describe the socio-cultural characteristics of the population to monitor the status of each country in achieving the objectives related to education.

In the European comparison, the indicator calculated by ISTAT identifies the share of population aged 18-24 who left school without having obtained a title above the level 3C short of the International Classification on education levels (Isced97). In the Italian education system, this indicator represents the percentage of the population aged 18-24 that has no educational qualifications at higher than lower secondary education, is not in possession of professional qualifications obtained in courses lasting at least two years and do not attend either school courses or training activities.

National data - The different systems and methods of detection of the phenomenon have consequently a different quantification of the phenomenon itself.

Since 2008 the ESL rate in Italy remains well above the EU average (15% in 2014 compared with the EU average of 11.1%), especially among foreign-born students (32.6% in 2014 compared with the EU average of 20.1%) and in southern areas.⁶

Moreover, there is a significant gender gap as the rate is 17.7% for boys, compared with 12.2% for girls. Italy however, achieved the largest decrease in the ESL rate in the EU between 2013 and 2014 (1.8 percentage points) and has now reached the Europe 2020 national target of 16%.

While the participation of upper secondary students in vocational education and training remains above the EU average (59.4% compared with 48.9% in 2013), the employment rate of recent upper secondary graduates is the lowest in the EU (38.3% in 2014). This is partly due to insufficiently developed work-based learning: only 10.7% of upper secondary students participated in traineeships in 2013/14, although this figure has been on an upward trend in the last few years. Italy has the second highest proportion of young people

⁶ Eurostat 2014

not in education, employment or training in the EU (26.2% of 15-29 year-olds in 2014) after Greece (26.7%).

During compulsory education, boys tend to experience more difficulties than girls in adapting to the school environment and generally have lower achievement levels. Boys are over-represented among pupils with disabilities (61%) and are more likely to show emotional and behavioral problems, or specific learning difficulties (65%).

About 60% of Italian early school leavers are either unemployed or inactive and face long-term social and economic disadvantage. It is well documented that early leaving from education and training leads to reduced employment opportunities and increased likelihood of unemployment, poverty and social exclusion.

Main factors contributing to ESL -

From a CENSIS analysis, the main factors contributing to ESL are:

- The socio-cultural family
- The teaching methods and school facilities
- The psychological dimension of the students
- The estrangement of schools from the world outside

In 1998, the Commission VII of the Italian Chamber of Deputies established a “Committee survey” and approved the “Consultation on the problem of school dropouts (2000)”, identifying some causes related to ESL:

- The combination of underdevelopment (poverty) and environmental urban (metropolitan degradation), definitely affects the education system. The Southern Italy is the weakest area of the Country;

- Family cultural background, in particular, the parents' educational level is considered more relevant than the parents' income;
- Dominant cultural orientations, which attribute value to the money rather than education ("intellectual poverty");
- The communication barriers between school and home;
- The educational approach far from students' interests and incentives;
- Discontinuity between primary and secondary school due to the changing of teachers;
- The growing of weakness and uncertainty feeling among young students compared to the group, inside and outside the school.

A different form of ESL seems to characterize the richest areas of the Country (especially the North-East) which has apparently discredit the theory that the dispersion is directly dependent on poverty and under-development.

ESL in these areas mainly affects the secondary school (the phenomenon in compulsory education is almost non-existent) as a result of a spread "work culture" that often rejects the idea of the usefulness of academic qualifications to succeed in working life.

2.3 LEGISLATION REGARDING ESL

In Italy, the main policy measures carried out against early school leaving in recent years, have been made through the National Operational Programs (NOP) managed by the Ministry of Education.

From 2002 to 2006, the NOP “The School for Development” has implemented a number of actions against the dispersion. In the period 2007-2013 as part of NOP - Specific Objective F - “To promote academic success, equal opportunities and social inclusion” - were invested 270 million euro (5700 projects, 450,000 shares) for the 4 Convergence regions (Calabria, Campania, Puglia, Sicily). As part of the PAC – Action and Cohesion Plan - Priority Education, from 2012 ACTION 3 is in progress - “Development of prototypes of educational activity in the areas of acute cultural and social exclusion” - dedicated to the recovery of weakest categories (42,9 M Euro).

The first tranche of the program (NOP 2002-2016) was addressed to 30 provinces and almost 400 institutions of primary and secondary school level. The measures were aimed at the promotion of “positive experiences of preventing and combating ESL in VET, to be presented as model of intervention, prototypes, for all educational institutions”⁷. The measures promoted also the multi-stakeholders approaches of the Institutions, i.e.

⁷ Ministry of Education, University and Research - Department of Planning and management of human, financial and instrumental resources. Directorate General for International Affairs Office IV - Planning and management of European Structural Funds and national development and social cohesion. Prot.n. AOODGAI/199 Rome, January 8, 2013 - Programming of the Structural Funds 2007-2013 - Notice for the "Realization of prototypes of educational activities in the areas of homelessness and culture, including through the enhancement of existing networks" - financed by the ESF. School years 2012/2013 and 2013/2014 - Implementation of the Operational Programmes FSE Ob. Convergence - Action and Cohesion Plan. Phase II of the procedure initiated by note AOODGAI / 11666 of July 31, 2012

networks of schools and private organisations and social parties. In fact, networks establishment is the distinctive element of the NOP actions, in which, in a logic of synergy and integration, operate “the different actors in each territory, represented not only by the schools, but also from other educational and social agencies, who actively participate in the project as community education”⁸.

In recent years, it has been also confirmed the awareness that effective action against this phenomenon should always be programmed at local level in order to run simultaneously on many levels: school, family, society, public and private institutions of the territory. It is for this reason, that local entities are dedicated to implement actions based the integrated training system approach, which requires the construction of network interventions, knowing that the school is not enough to deal with the ESL.

Recently, the Ministry of Education published an Operative Manual for the development of projects within the 2016-2020 NOP “Competences and learning environment for schools”, in support of social inclusion in order to guarantee the opening of schools even in the afternoon, especially in those suburban areas or at risk exclusion.

Different actions have been put in place at national and local level to prevent ESL

At national level:

- the gradual implementation of the National Register of students;

⁸ Early school leaving. Commission VII: "Italy invests little", measures to extend BES and enhance "students Registry," <http://www.orizzontescuola.it/>

- innovation of the regulatory framework within the National Guidelines for the curriculum of basic school (3-14 years) which clearly defines goals, objectives and methodologies to prevent and combat early school leaving;
- increasing the duration of compulsory education and training to 10 years compared to a minimum total of eight years defined by the Constitution and the related opportunity to accomplishing compulsory education through three channels: education system, system of vocational training and apprenticeship;
- the reform of upper secondary education with the strengthening of technical and vocational courses and the implementation of technical Higher Education;
- recognition (in the cultural background of the student) of credits arising from exercises, internships or work activities;
- the numerous actions aimed at contrast and prevent the ESL put in place, with agreements between local authorities, schools and private organisations (third sector) in application of the law n. 285/97 and subsequent Law no. 328/2000;⁹
- NOP interventions (“Security”, “Competencies for development”), in agreement with local authorities and schools. The NOP “Competencies for development”, in particular, has put together a series of coordinated structural interventions for schools (supply of equipment, technologies and laboratories; establishment of new resource centers and service centers), and actions in support of human and professional resources (teachers training, specifically aimed at addressing the problem of dispersion, information and training for parents, etc.).

These actions confirmed the relevance of strong relationship among schools, institutions and third sector for the success of the NOP as a whole, but with special reference to the

⁹ Law No. 328/2000 - "Law framework for the realization of the integrated system of interventions and social services" has redefined the profile of social policies. Based on this law a lot of interventions have made to protect social welfare, youth, etc. This law also established the Area Plan.

dispersion. Special working groups, scheduled meetings and joint initiatives with institutions and social partners were promoted in support for these initiatives, and to better coordinate the NOP with POR promoted by the Regions.¹⁰

Actions at local level:

- interventions of guidance performed individually or in coordination between the Permanent Territorial Centers, employment centers in the provinces, autonomous schools, etc.,
- actions brought by private social organizations aimed at organizing groups of teenagers or young individuals delivering “second chance schools”;
- As part of the autonomy of schools, also, in Italy individual Educational institutions may organize supporting, recovering and guidance initiatives, as well as programs and measures to be supported with the Public Fund to improve Education Offer.

¹⁰ FGA EDUCATION PROGRAM WORKING PAPER No. 27 (3/2010) “Compulsory schooling or right/duty to education and training: In search of fairness” - Luciano Benadusi (University of Rome La Sapienza) Orazio Nicephorus (Tuttoscuola), Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli

2.4 STAKEHOLDER ECO-SYSTEM FOR ESL PREVENTION

In Italy actions to address the problem of the dispersion, are delivered at macro level by national policy, and at a micro level by territorial and/or at school level, therefore it is complex to trace a comprehensive framework and, more importantly, to measure the effectiveness of the policies undertaken.

Here are presented the some strategies adopted by stakeholders to prevent the ESL phenomenon.

1.Provincial Employment Centers - The Provincial Employment Centers host the Tutoring of compulsory education service in order to give effect to the provisions of article 68 of Law n. 144/9932 on compulsory education.¹¹ The service is offered to adolescents in order to ensure they can use the opportunities offered by the local structures promoting the fulfilment of the right/duty to education and training, supporting in particular the transition phases.

The tutoring service provided through the Employment Centers develops its actions on the basis of the data provided by the Provincial Registry office (or the Employment Information System, educational institutes, training institutions and local social services) about the young people who appear to be at risk of ESL or are in dispersion, with the aim to bring them back to the educational and training system.

The Service aims to identify a solution to the difficulties of the users; the enhancement of young cognitive emotional and social skills, to develop a personal process of educational

¹¹ The employment services decentralized organize the regional registry of those who have fulfilled or completed their compulsory schooling and prepare the related orientation initiatives" (art. 68, par. 3, Law . 144/1999).

and vocational guidance; orientation and personalized tutoring in situations of transition between different training channels or different personal experiences; orientation and personalized tutoring in situations of transition to employment, including apprenticeships.

2. Educational Institutions

a. Example of measures addressed to ESL are *extracurricular / after school activities* implemented by schools to boost self-esteem, improve motivation and support learning processes among students. The aim of this type of intervention is to keep the youngsters away from the street. It is now also known that education outside the school context is crucial for the prevention of early school leaving; so it is important that in the afterschool sites for learning are present spaces dedicated to sports and social activities. These projects can be developed using both the sports and artistic activities.

b. In November 1995, in order to fight the increasing number of young people leaving school without any degree or qualification, the European Commission and all the Education Ministries of the 15 member states of the European Union, adopted Mrs. Edith Cresson's proposal (white paper) on education and training entitled: "Enseigner et Apprendre. Vers une société cognitive". This proposal presented the *Second Chance system*, as a pedagogical answer to school failure and social reinsertion. "Second Chance Schools" are experimental educational institutions, born in Italy and in many European cities since the late 80s. They offer young people who have already dropped out of school a second chance to participate in education and training. The primary objective of the this kind of school is to reintegrate young people, who leave the national school system without

any degree or qualification, into the working systems (world of training and employment), and hence into society. In the Italian context, the “Second Chance Schools” offer to Italian and migrant children, who have failed in the “first chance” school system (pupils repeating, dropout, irregular attendance, educational failure, relational difficulties, etc.), parallel or alternative paths to the school with the objective to achieve a license and to acquire qualifications. Through a work of guidance and support, these schools are aimed to reintegrate youngsters in the formal education and/or in vocational training (higher education, professional training courses, etc.) and/or to raise the young employability rates.

c. School Institutions can establish the *CIC, Information and Consulting Center*, that develops and provides group, sports and cultural activities, health information and discussion groups about adolescence and youth. The CIC organizes listening and counselling activities about students’ relationship and growth problems. It is established by the Head of school, in consultation with the Board of the Institute and with Public Services for health and social care for drug addicts, in upper secondary schools and is addressed to students. Counselling service for adolescents is dedicated to young people and their problems, to the difficulties that kids can have with the world of school, family and interpersonal relationships, and that can effect on ESL.

1. PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

PROVINCES

The Article. 3, paragraph 2, of the Presidential Decree 257/2000 and the legislative decree 15 April 2005 n. 76 required that the provinces had available the register of young people

in the age of compulsory education, in order to manage the data of these pupils. With a dual aim: to monitor the phenomenon of vocational education and training in order to design the most appropriate policy guidance for the drop out and have available statistical information and tools to implement the best actions planning school and vocational training.

The National System of Students Registry must record data on education pathways, training and apprenticeship of individual students, from the first year of primary school. The system allows public bodies to collect and manage information of students in Compulsory Training.

Ministry of Education - The strategy of Ministry of Education about “guidance” begins since the end of 2008 the Ministry of Education Ministry is supporting the adoption of a plan of action (Guidelines) ¹²that allows to prevent and tackle youth problems and dropout, accompanying each person in his individual growth, providing necessary information needed for a re-orientation, supporting the acquisition of skills and facilitating everyone choices and decisions. This planning tool also intends to accompany the professional development of teachers, promote a new methodology for students and, at the same time, re-open the dialogue with other institutional bodies, in the area, with businesses with the world of work and vocational training.

¹² http://hubmiur.pubblica.istruzione.it/web/istruzione/dg-studente/orientamento/aree_intervento_orientamento_dispersione_scolastica

2.5 USE OF DIGITAL DEVICES TO PREVENT ESL

Policy makers and educational stakeholders recognize the importance of ICT for learning, as it provides innovation and creativity in Education and Training.

In 2007 the Italian Ministry of Education launched a Digital School National Plan for Information Communication Technology in Italian classrooms, to introduce the use of technology as a source of innovation, new teaching practices, new tools to support quality teaching, in order to improve education and to reduce early school leaving, with implementation of creative classrooms and the inclusion of educational games in the traditional curriculum.

The use of digital devices helps the reduction of ESL, in fact innovative teaching practices can equip young people with knowledge and competences that are demanded in the information and knowledge society. The use of technologies in teaching and learning activities promotes more active roles for students in order to sustain the acquisition of ICT competencies, and breaks the traditional organization of space and time in schools and at home. This represents a shift to innovative teaching practices, particularly collaborative practices and more personalised teaching which can develop students' transversal skills, such as self-awareness, communication, collaboration, organization and problem-solving skills.

Although the use of ICT has been proved effective to increase learners' interest and encourage self-directed learning, the changes are not easy, as they require teachers' learning. Teachers need more and more support to integrate the use of technology in their

teaching practice, otherwise the ICT equipment may not be used. As it happened in 2003 with the introduction of interactive whiteboards as equipment of classrooms with ICT.

Italian teachers in general have very positive opinions about the impact of ICT use on students' motivation, achievement, as well as on the development of their transversal and thinking skills, but, although the use of digital devices is widely recognized as valuable means to prevent ESL, ICT teaching is not a widespread in Italy. In fact, the introduction of mobile devices into the classrooms by students is a phenomenon that can be the cause of many discussions.

There are different approaches of various schools in the use of technological devices in class: some restrictive schools prevent use of technological devices during class, while others seek to integrate use of student devices during teaching.

It should be recognized that traditional teaching methods are significantly changing. For teachers there are many resources, such as classroom management apps, powerful resources that enable educators to integrate technology in the classroom and enhance how they interact with students and the curriculum.

One of the techniques and methodologies adopted to prevent the dropout phenomenon from school is the *Flipped methodology*.

The Flipped classroom describes a reversal of traditional teaching where students gain first exposure to new material outside the class, exploiting on line materials with the support of ICT tools, and then class time is used to assimilate that knowledge through strategies such as problem-solving, discussion or debates.

The aim of the 'flipped classroom' is to provide a personalized learning experience for every student, whatever their learning style, pace or ability.

Since students can study and absorb information and knowledge by watching the video, the time in the "flipped" classroom can be spent applying their knowledge with engaging activities and personalized teacher support. They practice both peer learning and co-operative learning, working in the ICT laboratory. This different approach can improve the engagement of all the students, offering more attractive and stimulating learning.

Teachers take on the role of a facilitator of learning. They can have more time to personalize and individualize the learning for each student. Each student gets his/her own education tailored to their individual needs. Instead of a one size fits all education, each student gets just what they need when they need it.

2.6 SUMMARY OF THE NEEDS AND GAPS IDENTIFIED

Despite the “inclusive” character of the Italian school, measures to tackle significantly the phenomenon of early school leavers and drop out still seem to have limited impact.

In general, the main challenges still to be addressed at national and local level are:

- Appropriate funding made available to the system, as a whole and to individual schools;
- Proper guidance system of educational-training;
- Adequate competence of teachers to manage issues such as marginalization of young people;
- Creating synergies between different competent institutions at local level (regional/provincial vocational training, educational services in and outside schools, social and health care etc.).

Measures adopted by schools, or local measures, are generally recognized as more effective because these could be models that can be exported even if they are sometimes episodic and experimental.

As regards the prevention, instead, a point of weakness currently stays in the measurement data and information system in order to act quickly to contain the ESL phenomenon. The National Registry of the students concerns only the students of the education system: this is not in connection with regional registers and is therefore necessary a data supplement from all different systems of data collection.

The “Guidelines” promoted by the Ministry of Education is a special effort in logic of prevention. However, it is necessary to support the system in identifying funding resources necessary for teacher training, on how to address the problem of dispersion, and for involving tutors in implementing specific interventions. The funds allocated by law n. 128/2013 are not enough for such a wide intervention. The entire initiative, therefore, must be equipped with tools and resources to ensure its concrete realisation.

The results achieved through the implementation of projects supported by National Operational Programs (NOP) are very different, especially with regard to the Convergence Objective regions (Sicily, Puglia, Calabria and Campania).

Regions that have received relevant funds, for example, have not registered improvements in their percentage accordingly to. This due also to the weakness of the monitoring system, the quality of the initiatives implemented, and the interest of the actors involved.

According to the consultation carried out by the Chamber of Deputies, it is possible, given the indications of the Thematic Workgroup on early school leaving of the European Commission¹³, to identify “five priorities that should characterize an effective strategy to combat early school leaving in Italy:

- 1) increasing access to childcare and kindergarten, especially in the regions of Southern Italy and the Islands;
- 2) qualification of vocational education and training, improving education offer in each region;
- 3) creation of appropriate learning environments (not just a matter of equipment), with realization of a plan for teacher training and experimentation of educational principles and

¹³ Final report "Reducing early school leaving: key messages and policy support", in November 2013.

educational practices focused on the factors that have a relevant impact on learning;

4) organization of a monitoring system, a national students Register based on the data provided by the National Evaluation System (which makes use of INVALSI), to assess early school leaving risk (low, medium or high)

5) more interventions for families of students at risk, for enhancing their educational commitment and skills.

Finally, given the national emergency regarding school drop-out, the same consultation suggests to set up a crisis unit, at the Presidency of the Council, to coordinate ongoing interventions 2014-20 and involving all stakeholders (Ministry of Education, other Ministries involved, the State- Regions Conference, Invalsi, Region Scholastic Offices, etc.) on clear and targeted objectives and to promote the schools and Region Scholastic Offices networking to achieve these objectives.

Studies and researches demonstrate how the ESL is a multi-dimensional issue related to individual factors, individual relationship between the individual and the group, the world of work and the institutions.

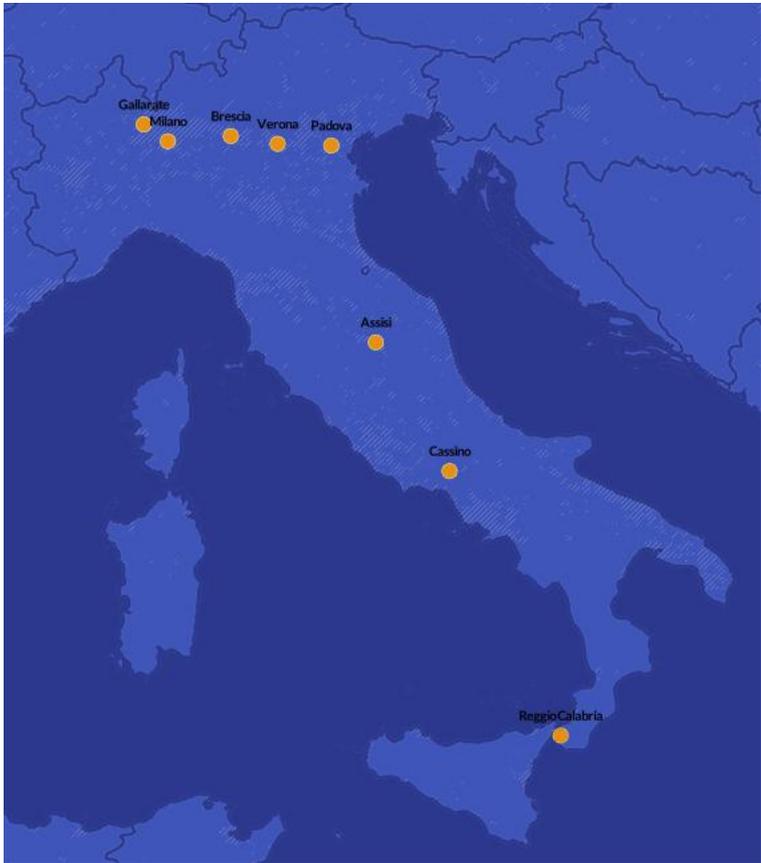
The same studies underline that most of the people at risk of dispersion show no self-confidence in their school skills and daily-life management skills¹⁴.

The development / improvement of these soft skills relevant for the kids' growth (e.g. problem solving, communication and social skills, critical thinking, autonomy etc.) need to be part of the educational subjects since the early school years.

Schools, as educational agencies, present the main place for the transmission and learning of these psychological and social skills.

¹⁴ <http://teslontario.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/BartelSoftSkillsSpring2011-.pdf>

2. GOOD PRACTICES

TITLE	Donmilani2
KEYWORDS	School, prevention, early leaving
LOCATION	<p>Milan, Lombardia Region, Italy.</p> <p>Seven years after the start, the Donmilani2 project offices increased. From the first experimental projects of 2010 in Quarto Oggiaro (Milan) and Africo (in the province of Reggio Calabria), the areas concerned are now nine: from Milan to Gallarate, from Brescia to Verona and Padua, Assisi and Cassino, until in Caccuri Calabria.</p> 

PROMOTING ORGANISATION	 <p>Foundation Exodus – Progetto Don Milani 2</p>
DURATION	<p>From 2010 – ongoing</p>
DESCRIPTION	<p>There are two levels of intervention proposed, relating to different intensities of the school discomfort.</p> <p>The first concerns boys and girls that, while maintaining as a fundamental reference the traditional classroom, require educational and personalized educational interventions. The second level is for students who show rejection attitudes towards the school, for which the class is a source of discomfort. This requires a strong educational presence, good coordination with other educational and social agencies, a structuring of time and objectives calibrated to each pupil.</p> <p>Practice shows that the school discomfort may have a solution, which comes from the ability of the class and modulating various registers educators tips on different levels of intervention. The success of the project stems from the synergy that the same can build between students, families, school and the area's resources.</p> <p>Recipients</p> <p>Boys and girls who have not got the first secondary school diploma or attending the first years of the VET Institute and highlighting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● serious difficulties of control; poor ability to establish positive relationships with adults; bullying and group complicity ● serious delay, not due to specific learning disorders or disabilities ● difficulties in attention and concentration ● obvious difficulties of integration between the pariah / or relationship to adult environment of the school, due to alienation caused by language or diverse cultures <p>Beneficiaries of the project are also the families of the recipients of teaching children / educational programs.</p>

RESULTS/IMPACT	<p>The interventions carried out in different locations have set a number of objectives, occurred in the evaluation phase</p> <p>Observation of the data collected at the end of the school year shows that the goal of obtaining the first secondary school diploma, has been achieved by 83% of students who took part in the activities.</p>
INFORMATION/ CONTACT	<p>https://donmilani2.com/il-progetto-2/</p>

TITLE	Frequenza 200
KEYWORDS	Volunteers, teachers, educators, risks, bullying, best practices
LOCATION	The project is developed in 6 Italian Regions: Lombardia, Piemonte, Campania, Lazio, Puglia and Sicily, involving 5,000 children, over 2,650 families, 850 teachers, 750 mothers, 250 informal workers and 350 volunteers.
PROMOTING ORGANISATION	<p>WeWorld is an Italian non-governmental organisation for the cooperation and development, independently recognized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. WeWorld is present in Italy, Asia, Africa and Latin America in support of childhood, women and local communities in the fight against poverty and inequalities for sustainable development.</p> <p>Since 2012 WeWorld gave birth to the Italian program, a structured proposal in which you put the project to address the problem of school dropouts. 'Frequency 200' is in fact a national network, a network which works with teachers, young people, their families in the territory and an online network to create knowledgeable citizens and able to choose.</p>
DURATION	From 2012 - ongoing
DESCRIPTION	<p>Frequenza200 is the first Network made in Italy to fight school leaving. The phenomenon in Italy is alarming dimensions: the boys aged 10 and 16 who leave school before the end of compulsory schooling account for 17%. Who are these guys? Where they live? Why come to this choice? There are many questions to be asked in order to begin a journey with them, to support them and motivate them.</p> <p>The intervention is a three-year action program as a response to the quality of civil society: citizens aware and able to choose.</p> <p>Why Frequenza200? Because 200 is the required teaching days that each school must guarantee by law in Italy.</p>

	<p>The program starts from the objective of involving schools, teachers, families who live the neighborhood, focusing attention on the school as a resource and training to change. The challenge is to build links with the various interlocutors, knowing and enhancing the specificity of each one, the program will include also specific actions for the involvement of informal social workers: the bar, a kiosk and a grocery store, downtown seniors, because the school is an intergenerational value and heritage, not only cultural, of neighborhood that retains its own particular rituals and social life.</p> <p>Individual projects are concrete actions with the goal of building a national network, of which WeWorld is sponsoring, on the theme of early school leaving and the quality of education: direct actions on the territory are inadequate if they are not accompanied by actions able to dialogue with national institutions, promoting a comparison in terms of good practices, creating effective models for intervention and replicable, capable of dialogue with the population and with those who make the laws, to encourage greater focus on the issue covered by the program.</p> <p>Operators, through the online network, have the ability to tell the different experiences and compare them to locate a replicable and sustainable model of intervention.</p>
RESULTS/IMPACT	<p>The project foresees the establishment of a day care center in each of the first three cities identified with the support and collaboration of local partners: Milan (Cooperative Zero5), Turin (Cooperative Association Terremondo and ASAI), Rome (Cemea Association of the South), Napoli (Centro IAMME-Opera Don Calabria), Palermo (Association Arteca) Conversano, Polignano a Mare, in the province of Bari Monopoli (Association Ithaca). Educational programs will be made in favor of the school and relational support activities of the children involved, in parallel with families of children with actions of counseling and reinforcing parenting skills. The schools will be involved with training of teachers, to create a team of homogeneous intervention to beneficiaries.</p> <p>"In the last three years - says Marco Chiesara, President of WeWorld - do not we measure the good results of the project by evaluating the academic success of the children, but according to their new quality of life, breaking cultural and social patterns, often antechamber of bullying, of violence and lack of respect for each other! "</p>
INFORMATION/ CONTACT	<p>http://www.frequenza200.it/il-progetto/</p>

TITLE	Maestri di Strada
KEYWORDS	Street teachers, mission, emotion, art, happiness, organization
LOCATION	Naples
PROMOTING ORGANISATION	Maestri di Strada is a non-profit association of educators, teachers and professionals fighting against the early school leaving
DURATION	From 2009 - ongoing
DESCRIPTION	<p>"Polúmetis: Methodologies Educational Territorial Social inclusion and Intelligence practice at work"; is the title of the project proposal that declaration of candidacy and that we believe holds together the priorities indicated. Polúmetis is one of the attributes of the hero Ulysses alongside polutropos translated with cunning or "multi-faceted genius." Polumetis instead could result as rich as intelligences or perhaps multiple intelligence, able to draw on many areas.</p> <p>In different interpretation property - degraded cunning and ability to falsification or exalted as capacity and resilient plastic - the roots of an ancient distrust of informal learning and related to the context, by those who hold the formal knowledge.</p> <p>"Polúmetis" intends to explore the places and ways of a possible interaction between intelligence and school subjects in terms of a better ability of the school to hire people in educational processes and knowledge today on the edge.</p> <p>1 - Objectives in relation to the horizontal priority "Reducing Disparities in learning outcomes Affecting Disadvantaged learners": METIS The approach is particularly suitable to reduce inequalities in outcomes for disadvantaged sections of society and for individuals crossed by falls and interest in learning school and for active participation in civic life. The methodology METIS promotes to the rank of resources informal skills that, in teaching approaches linear, are experienced as alien and conflicting and allows young people and to holders of parental care to feel welcomed and valued. For the same reason enables educators to address the teaching creatively using the resources of the students themselves. This project therefore aims to: 1) support and promote with partners innovative projects based on the</p>

	<p>approach METIS; 2) promote access and participation of students otherwise designated to disperse, or intended to flow back in the condition of social exclusion of groups from which</p> <p>2 - Objectives in relation to the priority sector "Supporting schools to tackle early school leaving (ESL) and disadvantage as well as to address all students from the lowest to the highest end of academic spectrum". The methodology METIS supports: 1) institutions in tackling early school leaving with new pedagogical devices that enhance informal skills; 2) The professionals, members of the educational community, the enhancement of informal learning and formative assessment; 3) formative assessment, shared and integrated, of formal, informal, soft skills, personal empowerment, making it a time of growth of the person and of the educational community.</p> <p>3 - Objectives in relation to the priority sector "Strengthening the profile of the teaching professions": The methodology METIS strengthens the professional skills of teachers through the context of action. The initial and continuing training for teaching integrated, creative, holistic, is realized in the alternation of field experience and reflection on them-as well as encoded by the methodology of action research - and the interplay between the reflection on the experiences and the experiences of the students and the way they resonate in the psyche of the individual professionals, as codified by the methodology of the groups multivision. The process used to develop the capacity for empathy that research indicates as crucial for inclusive education without providing a methodology for their development.</p>
RESULTS/IMPACT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New professional skills: for new teachers; - The practice of inclusive education; - Guidelines for the evaluation of learning - A curriculum to grow: learning materials and educational content; - A curriculum for growth: new assessment tools - Groups multivision for the formation of new professional skills of educators; - Teaching and constructs custom pedagogical cozy; - Evaluation methods between formal and informal, between school and territory
INFORMATION/ CONTACT	<p>http://www.maestrigradadistrada.it/progetti/view/40/polmetis-intelligenza-capace-di-nutrirsi-nei-contesti</p>

3. SOFT SKILLS TO MEET THE NEEDS AND COVER THE GAPS

We distributed 95 paper-based questionnaires to 87 students, aged 15-17, 59 boys and 28 girls from second and third classes , and 8 teachers of IIS FEDERICO CAFFE' Secondary School for the survey on the existing needs, best practices, and soft skills required. We explained the aim of the survey and answered any question they asked, whenever they had doubts on the meaning of the questions. The survey took place in the pupils' classrooms during the morning.

We proposed the semi structured interviews prepared by the Partner from Folkuniversitetet, granting the interviewees an open, safe and trusting atmosphere, as they suggested, in order to have valid data. After an introduction on the aim of the interview, we collected personal information on seven interviewees: 4 teachers of IIS FEDERICO CAFFE' secondary school, and 3 employers, one lawyer and two business consultants. The interviews took place at school in available rooms, and at the employers' place of work.

The focus group was organised after the desk research and surveying were conducted. A mixed group of 20 stakeholders, teachers and employers, took part in the focus group. They met at IIS FEDERICO CAFFE' Secondary School in the Principal's office. The goals of the focus group were to identify 10 common soft skills, needed to meet the existing needs, and to obtain feedback on the research report.

4.1 SURVEY

The questionnaire proposed was divided into four parts:

1. Socio-demographical data about respondents

2. Factors most influencing the decision to quit school (closed questions)

“What would you advise students to prevent early leaving school?” (open question)

“What would you advise school to do, to prevent this from happening?” (open question)

“What would you advise parents to do, to prevent this from happening?”(open question)

3. Best practices

Measures taken to prevent early school leaving

Measures considered the most effective

List of recognised best practices within preventing early school leaving, known by respondents

4. Soft skills most required on the Italian labour market (closed question)

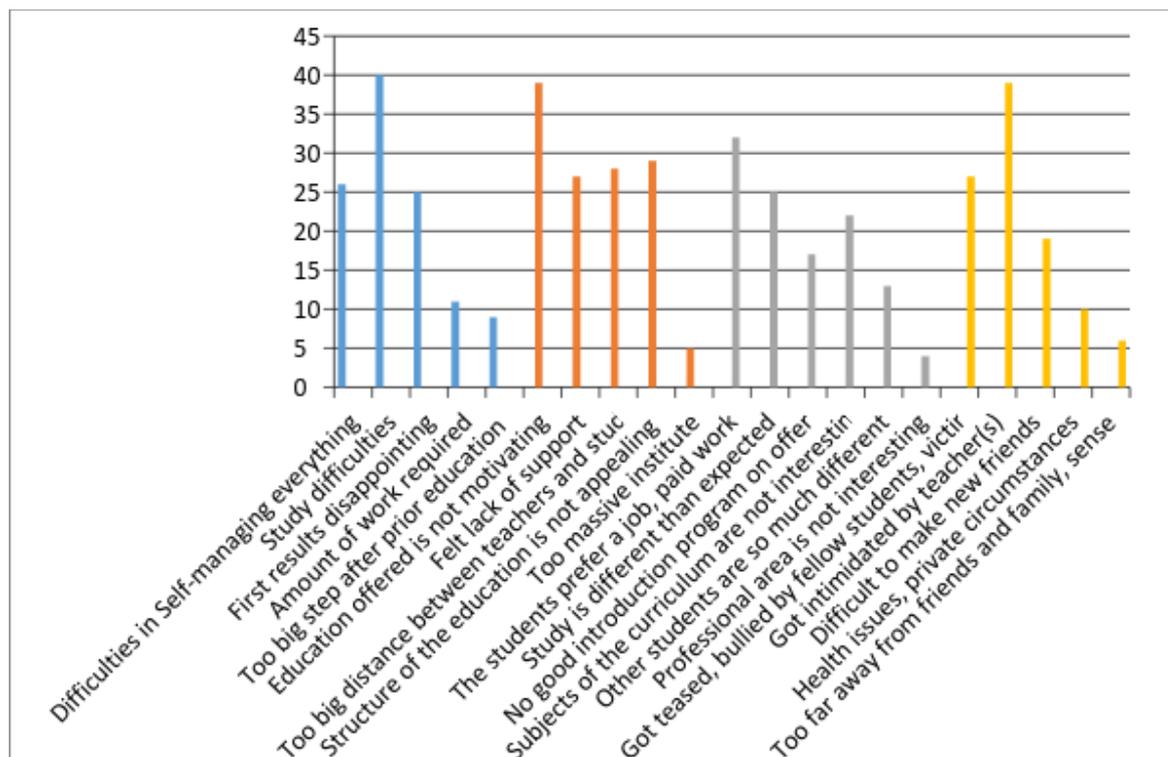


Figure 1: Factors influencing the decision to quit school

As we can see from the bar chart (Fig. 1), the respondents of the survey think that the factors which most influence the decision to quit school, related to the capacity and competences for studying, are the study difficulties, the difficulties in self-managing everything, and then the first disappointing results. A relatively small number of respondents thinks that the amount of work required can be an influencing factor.

As for the factors related to the organization of the study, the most popular response was that the education offered is not appealing or motivating, that there is lack of support and too big distance between teachers and students.

For what concerns the orientation on study and career choice, most respondents think that the early school leavers prefer an income in comparison with continuing education, that the study is different from what they expected, or that the subjects are not interesting.

The most influencing factors related to personal development are the following: students are intimidated by teachers, teased, bullied by fellow students, victims of gossip, or they have difficulties in making new friends.

To the open question **“What would you advise students to prevent early leaving school?”**, the respondents answered that the students at risk should:

- Choose motivating and interesting course to develop their talents
- Think about the importance of education for future life
- Think about those young people who would like to but can't go to school
- Ask for teachers, friends or families' support
- Attend extra courses to increase their interests
- Listen to parents and teachers: Remember they are not alone
- Don't give up, think carefully before taking a decision
- Follow their ideas when choosing the right school
- Be committed in what they are doing
- Be informed about the changes in Italian labour markets
- Remember that the highest possible qualifications will give students the best chances

of securing the most remunerative employment, during their working lives

To the open question “**What would you advise school to do, to prevent this from happening?**”, the respondents suggested schools and teachers should:

- listen to students
- be patient, friendly, understanding and supportive
- be more motivating and motivated
- offer mentoring programs and family support
- propose new topics and interesting involving projects
- provide extra curricular activities
- Propose funny and pleasant activities
- Offer psychological support
- Try to find a meeting point
- Create a welcoming environment to support social learning, active listening and caring observation
- Adopt innovative programmes and strategies, work on students’ basic competences
- Be aware of different learning needs and encourage students’ interests
- Give students individual support, particularly in cases of “special needs”, identifying their personal strengths and weaknesses
- Undertake “one to one” mentoring whenever possible
- Tackle truancy as one of the first signs of potential early school leaving and react to it immediately
- Look for common pathways working together with families and external professionals
- Promote cooperation with colleagues to develop teamwork
- Be open to support from external professionals, educational agencies, community associations and employers
- Learn from the mistakes and from the positive experiences of colleagues
- Put in place a support mechanism to help relationships with families which often become difficult when problems occur
- Attend training programmes to develop professional skills, learn innovative strategies
- Promote the extensive use of technology
- Judge results, not students

To the open question “**What would you advise parents to do, to prevent this from happening?**”, the respondents advised parents to:

- Talk to children to fully understand the situation and identify the causes of any problems at school
- Attend student/parents/teachers meetings
- Seek interaction with school to develop a common strategy to prevent truancy and disruptive behaviors
- Keep in close touch with teachers and head teacher if problems occur
- Help with the choice of personal pathways if necessary
- Be close to their children, listen and help them, spend time with them
- Help their children to build their self-esteem
- Listen to their children and trust them
- Help them be independent
- Be satisfied with their children’s results

Students know that the measures the school takes in order to prevent ESL are all of the following:

- attendance tracking and monitoring
- learning support programs
- social and personal development program
- parental program and family support
- out-of-school program transfer programs
- mentoring programs

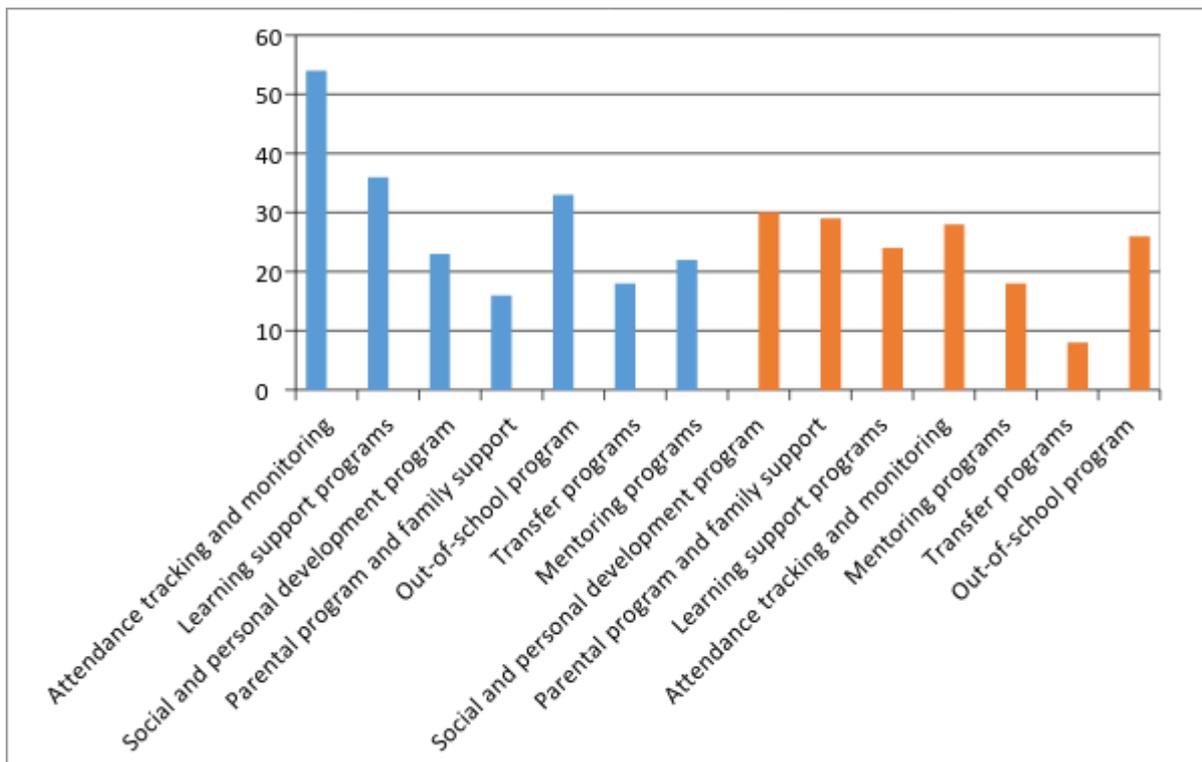


Table 2: Measures to prevent ESL considered most effective

As we can see from table 2, the measures the respondents consider most effective are:

- attendance tracking and monitoring
- learning support programs
- social and personal development program
- parental program and family support
- out-of-school program.

None of the respondents know recognised best practices within preventing ESL.

In table 3, we can see the soft skills they consider most required on the Italian labour market :

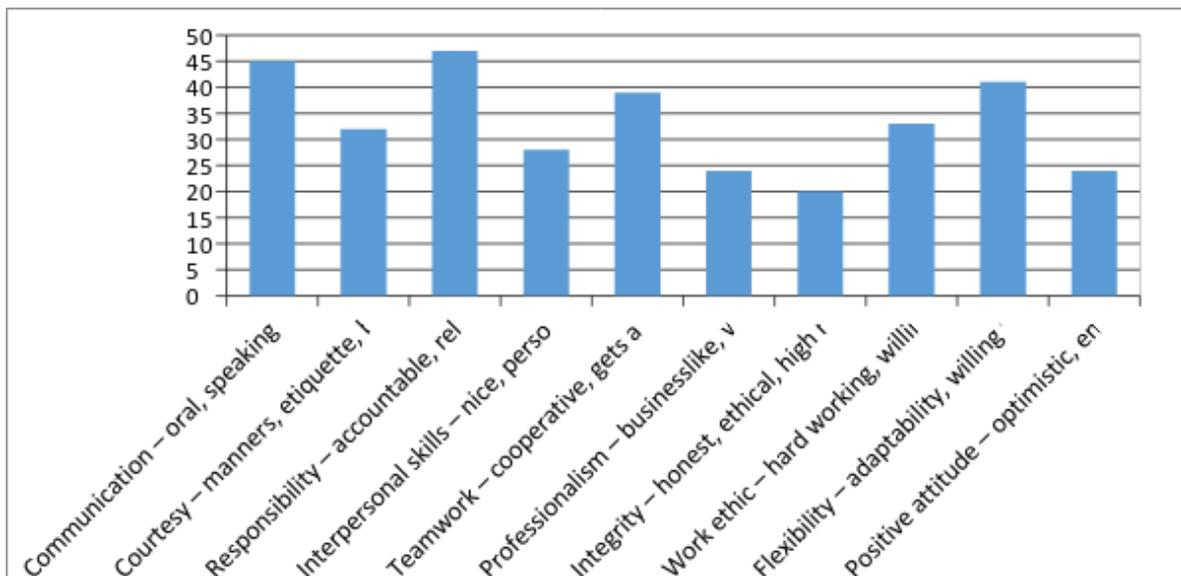


Table 3: Soft skills most required on the Italian labour market

1. Responsibility – accountable, reliable, gets the job done, resourceful, self-disciplined, wants to do well, conscientious, common sense;
2. Communication – oral, speaking capability, written, presenting, listening;
3. Flexibility – adaptability, willing to change, lifelong learner, accepts new things, adjusts, teachable;
4. Teamwork – cooperative, gets along with others, agreeable, supportive, helpful, collaborative.

4.2 INTERVIEWS

After a short introduction by the interviewer and general information about the interview, there were 3 sections:

Section 1. Needs

1.1 General information on National/regional/organization policy on ESL

1.2 Factors of early school leaving

1.3 What in your opinion are the needs of schools in terms of preventing ESL?

Section 2. Best practices

2.1 Measures taken by schools

2.2 Perception of effectiveness of measures taken

2.3 Ideas for increasing effectiveness

Section 3. Soft skills most required on the labour market in your region/country

Section 1. Needs

1.1 General information on National/regional/organization policy on ESL

The **teachers interviewed** have some general information on national or regional policies on the prevention of early school leaving, and on actions and strategies adopted by the School, in particular those actions concerning learning support, family support, individual support, customized teaching, peer to peer tutoring, mentoring, work-linked training, educational counseling, but they didn't have information about the size of the issue of ESL in their school, or on the ESL rate in the past few years. They think the percentage of ESL in their School is 10%, and that isn't far from reality.

One of the teachers interviewed, who comes from previous experiences in the south of Italy, explained how different and more serious is the situation in that part of Italy. Policies to recover and support early school leavers are more intense: some teachers look for students in the streets to bring them back to school, proposing them any kind of extra curricular activity which can be involving.

The **employers interviewed** have no idea of the national or regional policies to

prevent ESL.

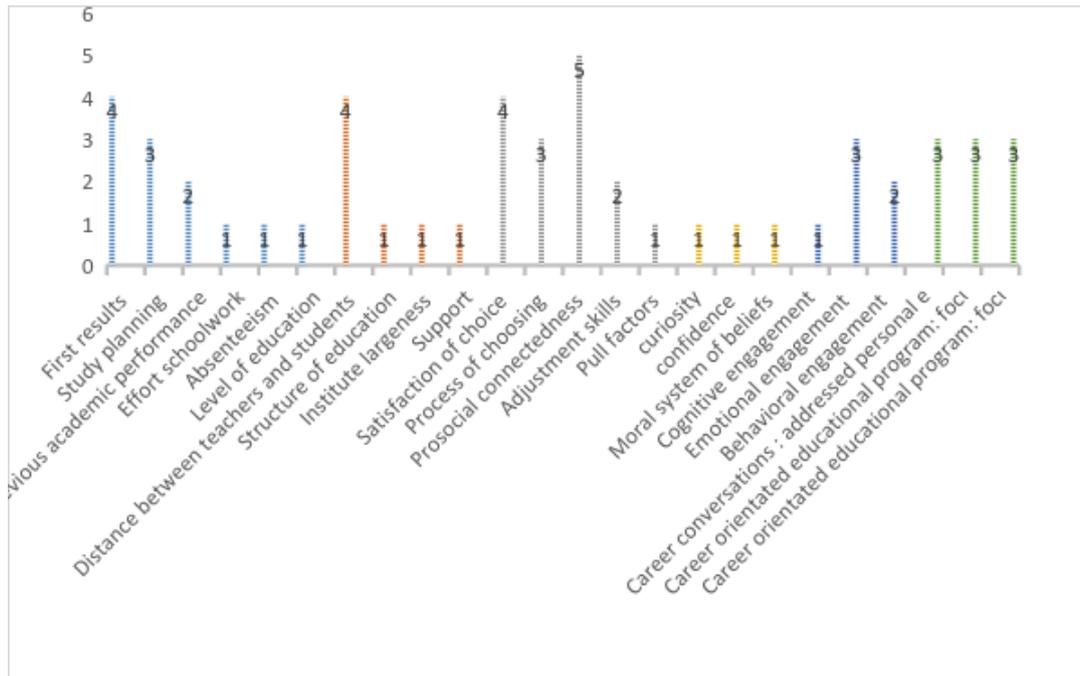


Table 4: Factors which teachers consider most influencing for ESL

As shown in table 4, the factors related to the capacity and competence for studying which the interviewees consider to play a decisive role in ESL are in the following order:

1. First disappointing results
2. Difficulties in study planning
3. Disappointing previous academic performance
4. Too much effort for schoolwork
5. Absenteeism
6. Low level of education.

With respect to the organisation of the study / education, the most decisive factors are considered:

- distance between teachers and students
- structure of education
- institute largeness
- lack of support

For the factors concerning orientation on study and career choice, the most relevant factor is considered the satisfaction of choice .

A particular attention is given to the sense of belonging: prosocial connectedness , and adjustment skills are both considered relevant factors.

With reference to adaptability and core competences, curiosity, confidence , moral system of beliefs are all considered possible decisive factors.

The interviewees consider more relevant the emotional and behavioral engagement , rather than the cognitive one.

As regards career-orientated learning climate, they indicate the following: personal experiences & ambitions and students' career issues, focus on practice and applied content, customized learning conditions.

The employers think that the most decisive factors are related to :

- Career conversations : addressed personal experiences & ambitions and students' career issues
- Career orientated educational program: focus on practice,request- oriented and applied content
- Career orientated educational program: focus on real, and relevant customized learning conditions
- Emotional engagement
- Behavioral engagement

About the ways schools in Italy address these factors, both teachers and employers indicated the following actions:

- Attendance tracking and monitoring
- Mentoring programs among students
- Learning support programs
- Social and personal development program
- Parental program and family support
- Education counseling

- Immigrants support
- Work-related learning
- Teachers' helpfulness
- Increasing students' motivation, developing their talent
- Improving study skills
- Peer to peer tutoring
- Increasing curiosity
- Teaching students how to face problems

Both teachers and employers think the main need of the school in terms of preventing ESL, is to keep schools open all day long, offering extra courses, such as drama, sports, language courses.

Section 2. Best practices

2.1 Measures taken by schools

The school takes the following measures for preventing ESL

- The school monitors attendance of the students and informs families if the number of days on which the students are absent is too high: they can't miss more than 25% of school days.
- The teachers suggest a change of course among the possibilities offered in the morning, in the evening, or in other schools.
- Teachers organize learning support programs, or they let older students help the younger and weaker ones.
- Some students with emotional and behavioral issues are advised to talk to the school psychologist
- Parents and families are always kept informed about the situation of their children.
- Teachers are reference figures
- Schools offer relevant and engaging curriculum to motivate pupils to fully develop their strengths and talents.
- Teachers favour a better integration of newly arrived migrant children
- Schools provide opportunities for all young people to explore and learn more about the world of work and ease transition to the labour market

- Pupils and parents are involved in school decision-making to increase their engagement and motivation and facilitate school effectiveness.
- Teachers provide a strong and well-developed guidance system to provide young people with the information they need to make informed education and career choices.
- Individual learning support, flexible learning pathways, high quality teaching, and learning based on student-focused methods are a substantial part of school policies aimed at reducing ESL
- Extra-curricular and out-of-school activities provide opportunities for young people to develop a sense of belonging

2.2 Perception of effectiveness of measures taken

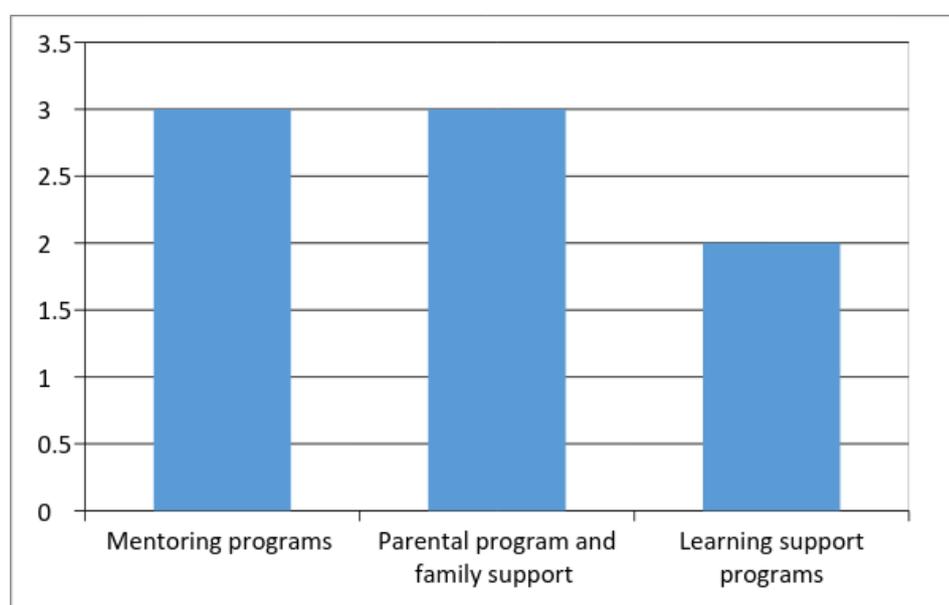


Table 5: Effective measures the school takes in order to prevent ESL

The measures both teachers and employers perceive as effective are (table 5):

- Mentoring programs
- Parental program and family support
- Learning support programs

2.3 Ideas for increasing effectiveness

Employers and teachers' suggestions on what should have been done in the period prior to ESL are the following:

- Decreasing the distance between teachers and students
- Motivating students
- Listening to students
- Letting students be observers of the class lessons in order to understand weak and strong points: this is useful for both students and teachers
- Proposing extra curricular activities
- Increasing communication and cooperation among teachers
- Developing soft skills
- Supporting families of foreign students

Section 3. Soft skills required

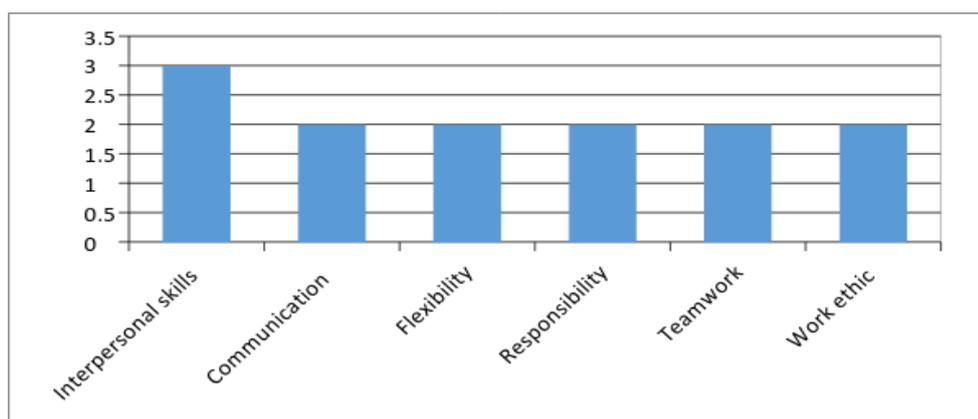


TABLE 6: Soft skills most required on the Italian labour market according to teachers

According to teachers the soft skills most required on the Italian labour market are the following:

- Interpersonal skills – nice, personable, sense of humor, friendly, nurturing, empathetic, has self-control, patient, sociability, warmth, social skills
- Communication – oral, speaking capability, written, presenting, listening
- Flexibility – adaptability, willing to change, lifelong learner, accepts new things, adjusts, teachable
- Responsibility – accountable, reliable, gets the job done, resourceful, self-

disciplined, wants to do well, conscientious, common sense

- Teamwork – cooperative, gets along with others, agreeable, supportive, helpful, collaborative
- Work ethic – hard working, willing to work, loyal, initiative, self-motivated, on time, good attendance

According to employers the soft skills most required in the Italian labour market are the following:

1. Responsibility – accountable, reliable, gets the job done, resourceful, self-disciplined, wants to do well, conscientious, common sense
2. Interpersonal skills – nice, personable, sense of humor, friendly, nurturing, empathetic, has self-control, patient, sociability, warmth, social skills.
3. Work ethic – hard working, willing to work, loyal, initiative, self-motivated, on time, good attendance

4.3 FOCUS GROUPS

On January 31st 2017 twenty three among teachers, employers, parents and stakeholders met at IIS FEDERICO CAFFE' to obtain feedback on the research report. The participants started with a brief presentation of the findings from the surveys and interviews effected among learners, teachers and employers, and were encouraged to focus on national or regional needs. The present summary is a description of the key issues and points raised during the discussions on the results of the research, along with the varied inputs of participants over the course of the session.

- An early school leaver is not just a number increasing an ESL percentage, but a human being whose future is prejudiced. Preventing early school leaving means enabling all students to become fulfilled individuals, and productive workers, to develop their potential as human beings, as citizens and as stakeholders in the economy.
- Every young person should have equal access to quality and inclusive education and the opportunity to develop his/her full potential. Tolerance , mutual respect, equal opportunities, social integration, intercultural understanding and a sense of belonging should be promoted.
- The design and quality of education systems also have a strong impact on learners' participation and performance. An unfavorable school climate, a learning environment in which learners do not feel respected or valued, teaching methods and curricula which may not always be the most appropriate, insufficient learner

support, lack of career education and guidance or poor teacher-pupil relationships may lead learners to leave education prematurely.

- Students' relationships with teachers has positive and long-lasting implications for both students' academic and social development. An inspiring and informed teacher, who shares the objectives with students, is the most important school-related factor influencing students' achievement.
- The students' engagement means a long-term development value for the school. Great teachers help create great students. It is not a pupil who leaves school, but it's the school which excludes him.
- Schools should offer extra-curricular activities with experienced educators helping students overcome their learning difficulties, improve their study skill, by giving directions without judging them. The provision of a wide range of accessible extracurricular activities - for instance, in sports, arts, laboratory activities, coach and team-building - can complement the learning experience, increase learners' participation, motivation and sense of belonging. Didactic laboratories favour the development and the acquisition of competences and improve the motivation of the students in learning within a co-operative and research environment.
- Many students lack experience with effective methods of study; they measure the effectiveness of their studying by the length of time they spend in front of a book.

What they learn in class must be fixed at home. Students should know how the brain commits information to memory: when they are interested in a subject, they are more likely to remember what they have learned; motivation, concentration, repeating an activity, and making connections, help fix a process or subject into long-term memory, because learning is not a static activity. Also teaching what they have learned, can help the learning process and boost their confidence.

- We should ensure that career education and guidance, more flexible pathways are available to all learners. Professionals should help learners make the right choice, and become the protagonists of their learning process. Families should be well informed about what to expect from each course.

- Mentoring, counseling and psychological support should be provided by the school, as well as the possibility of additional support for learners whose native language is not the language of instruction.

- It is essential to provide teachers, trainers, school leaders and other staff with the skills, competences and background knowledge needed to understand possible risk factors that might lead to disengagement or early school leaving.

The group then discussed about the importance of bringing closer the world of education and training and the world of work, to respond to the requests coming from the labour market. Participants identified the soft skills most required, to integrate them in the

teaching and learning process, in order to equip future workers with the 'right' competences for a successful transition from school education to the labour market.

Participants defined soft skills as interpersonal qualities, intellectual and practical skills, ethical values and personal attributes that one possesses, which help people deal effectively with the challenges of their professional and everyday life.

The group identified the top 10 soft skills perceived as the most important:

1. Learning to learn, continuous improvement
2. Responsibility, reliability
3. Effective communication
4. Self awareness, self confidence, adaptability, flexibility, assertiveness
5. Interpersonal competences: empathy, social interaction, co-operation, teamwork
6. Professional ethics
7. Decision making, problem-solving, conflict management
8. Critical thinking, creative thinking
9. Coping with emotion and coping with stress, positive attitude
10. Acting autonomously, commitment, hard working

It is often said that hard skills will get you an interview but you need soft skills to get and keep the job. Success is based not only on what you know but also on how you can communicate it. Employers want employees with strong soft skills, as well as hard skills, that are the technical abilities and knowledge. Giving students soft skills could make the

difference with someone who has technical ability and professional expertise, but no interpersonal qualities. For this reason soft skills should be viewed as an investment, also because they are not limited to one's profession.

Business educators need to understand the importance of interpersonal skills for their students and should include them in their curriculum. Participants all agreed on the fact that the most pertinent teaching approaches to be employed in integrating soft skills, are the student-centered teaching methods. The use of digital technologies can be the best way for their training. In a smart environment each student could set personal goals for continuous improvement. Through this process students can explore their own areas of development, set "Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound" goals as well as identifying the best tools to achieve these goals. At regular intervals students can monitor their progress through assessments.

4.4 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

Soft skills are interpersonal qualities, intellectual and practical skills, ethical values and personal attributes that one possesses, which help people deal effectively with the challenges of their professional and everyday life. They should be integrated in the teaching and learning process, in order to respond to the requests coming from the labour market.

Giving students soft skills could make the difference with someone who has technical ability and professional expertise, but no interpersonal qualities. Adaptability and integration in the employment context become essential in the current and changeable working environment.

The most pertinent teaching approaches to be employed in integrating soft skills, are the student-centered teaching methods. The use of digital technologies can be the best way for their training. In a smart environment each student could set personal goals for continuous improvement, through the exposure to authentic, complex and real-life problems.

The group identified the top 10 soft skills perceived as the most important:

1. Learning to learn, continuous improvement
2. Responsibility, reliability
3. Effective communication

4. Self awareness, self confidence, adaptability, flexibility, assertiveness
5. Interpersonal competences: empathy, social interaction, co-operation, teamwork
6. Professional ethics
7. Decision making, problem-solving, conflict management
8. Critical thinking, creative thinking
9. Coping with emotion and coping with stress, positive attitude
10. Acting autonomously, commitment, hard working

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The *Transnational Needs Analysis Report on ESL* identifies the concrete problems and challenges, as well as the main career-oriented soft skills and competences required by the job markets in the participating countries. It also provides examples of good practices on ESL in the partner countries.

Since 2000, the Italian Ministry of Education has included ESL and drop-out under the concept of *school dispersion*, defined as “a set of phenomena that involves a slowdown in the formal course of study; failures of compulsory education; exits in progress or end of the year in the different degrees of compulsory education or post-compulsory, before reaching the qualification”.

Italy achieved the largest decrease in the ESL rate in the EU between 2013 and 2014 (1.8 percentage points) and has now reached the Europe 2020 national target of 16%.

The main factors contributing to ESL are: socio-cultural family; teaching methods and school facilities; psychological dimension of the students; estrangement of schools from the world outside

Different actions have been put in place at national and local level to prevent ESL: the gradual implementation of the National Register of students; innovation of the regulatory framework within the National Guidelines for the curriculum of basic school which clearly defines goals, objectives and methodologies to prevent and combat early school leaving; increasing the duration of compulsory education and training to 10 years; the reform of upper secondary education with the strengthening of technical and vocational courses and the implementation of technical Higher Education; recognition of credits arising from internships or work activities; coordinated structural interventions for schools and actions in support of human and professional resources.

Some strategies have been adopted by stakeholders to prevent the ESL phenomenon: Provincial Employment Centers offer services to adolescents in order to ensure they can use the opportunities provided by the local structures promoting the fulfilment of the right/duty to education; Extracurricular / after school activities implemented by schools to increase self-esteem, improve motivation and support learning processes among students; “Second Chance Schools” offer to Italian and migrant children, who have

failed in the “first chance” school system, alternative paths to the school with the objective to achieve a license and to acquire qualifications.

Policy makers and educational stakeholders recognize the importance of ICT for learning, as it provides innovation and creativity in Education and Training. The use of technologies in teaching and learning activities promotes more active roles for students in order to sustain the acquisition of ICT competencies.

The Ministry of Education identified “five priorities that should characterize an effective strategy to combat early school leaving in Italy: increasing access to childcare and kindergarten, especially in the regions of Southern Italy and the Islands; qualification of vocational education and training, improving education offer in each region; creation of appropriate learning environments ; organization of a monitoring system to assess early school leaving risk ; more interventions for families of students at risk, for enhancing their educational commitment and skills.

The development / improvement of the soft skills need to be part of the educational subjects since the early school years. Schools, as educational agencies, present the main place for the transmission and learning of these psychological and social skills.

Three examples of Good Practices to fight early school leaving have been described:

- “Donmilani2”, in Milan, with two levels of intervention proposed: the first concerns boys and girls who require educational and personalized educational interventions, the second level is for students who show rejection and discomfort towards the school.
- “Frequenza 200”, developed in 6 Italian Regions, where school Institutions can establish CIC, Information and Consulting Center, which organizes listening and counselling activities for students. The program starts from the objective of involving schools, teachers, families, focusing attention on the school as a resource to change.
- “Maestri di Strada”, located in Naples, intends to explore the places and ways of a possible interaction between intelligence and school subjects in terms of a better ability of the school to hire people in the educational process and knowledge today on the edge.

According to the survey, the factors which most influence the decision to quit school

are the study difficulties, education not appealing or motivating, intimidating teachers or fellow students; the most effective measures to prevent ESL are: attendance tracking and monitoring, learning support programs, social and personal development program, parental program and family support, out-of-school program; the soft skills most required on the Italian labour market are responsibility, communication, flexibility, teamwork.

According to the interviews, the factors which play a decisive role in ESL are: first disappointing results and difficulties in study planning, distance between teachers and students, structure of education, institute largeness, lack of support, satisfaction of choice, sense of belonging, lack of curiosity or confidence, emotional and behavioral engagement. The most important ways to address these factors are: attendance tracking and monitoring, mentoring programs among students, learning support programs, social and personal development program, parental program and family support, education counseling, immigrants support, work-related learning, teachers' helpfulness.

According to teachers the soft skills most required on the Italian labour market are: interpersonal skills, communication, teamwork, work ethic; while, according to employers the most required soft skills are responsibility, interpersonal skills, work ethic.