

WORKING ON TRANSITIONS FROM HOME

Booklet for
families

Resources for Families to Facilitate Diversity-based
Transitions from Primary to Secondary School to prevent ESL



With the support of the
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**WORKING ON
TRANSITIONS FROM HOME:
RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES TO FACILITATE
DIVERSITY-BASED TRANSITIONS FROM
PRIMARY TO SECONDARY SCHOOL
TO PREVENT ESL**

BOOKLET FOR FAMILIES



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1. INFORMATIVE PILLS

WHAT IS EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING?

Early school leaving (ESL) is broadly defined as the phenomenon of young people leaving formal education before they have successfully completed upper-secondary schooling.¹ The European Union defines early school leavers as people aged 18-24 who have only lower secondary education or less and are no longer in education or training.² However, early school leaving is broadly to be intended as the result of a process that runs through the student's life and education up to the point of leaving school.



WHY DOES ESL HAPPEN?

There is no one single reason that leads students to drop out of school. Instead, there are multiple risk factors which interact with each other. Factors are linked to individual characteristics, family background, schools, education systems and wider social and economic conditions.³

The decision to leave initial education is influenced not only by potentially limited or non-attractive prospects of further education and the more appealing alternatives offered by the youth labour market, but also by the cumulative negative past experiences of a long trajectory through primary and secondary school. Consequently, the issue of early school leaving draws attention to every characteristic of the education

- 1 EUROPEAN AGENCY for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, Early School Leaving and Learners with Disabilities and/or Special Educational Needs.
- 2 This definition was agreed by EU Education Ministers in the Council in 2003 (Council conclusions on "Reference levels of European Average Performance in Education and Training (Benchmarks)", May 2003.
- 3 EUROPEAN AGENCY for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, Early School Leaving and Learners with Disabilities and/or Special Educational Needs.
- 4 <https://nesetweb.eu/en/about-us/policy-themes/early-school-leaving-participation-in-education-and-training/>

system that influences the quality and equity of educational trajectories up to secondary education.⁴ These include, for example: the frequency and abruptness of transitions, personal or family problems, learning difficulties, or a fragile socio-economic situation. In addition, important elements are the way the education system is set up, school climate and teacher-pupil relations.

WHAT DOES ESL LEAD TO?

Early school leaving is linked to unemployment, social exclusion, poverty and poor health. Individual early school leavers are more likely to be unemployed, to be in precarious and low-paid jobs, to draw on welfare and other social programmes throughout their lives, and to encounter difficulties in gaining a place in vocational training. They are much less likely to be “active citizens” and to become involved in lifelong learning.⁵



ESL is considered an important factor in terms of poorer outcomes for the individual and society. Those who do not complete upper-secondary education tend to come from groups that are marginalised in many other ways, and tend to go on to experience multiple disadvantages into adulthood. ESL is associated with a greater likelihood of being unemployed (Bäckman, Jakobsen, Lorentzen, Österbacka & Dahl, 2015; Przybylski, 2014), a greater risk of poor life chances and poor health outcomes (Christle, Jolivet & Nelson, 2007; Gallagher, 2011) and a greater

risk of wider social exclusion (Bäckman & Nilsson, 2016; Jahnuainen & Järvinen, 2005; Wilkins & Huckabee, 2014). Young people who are identified as having SEND seem likely to be particularly at risk of ESL and also at a greater risk of poor psycho-social outcomes in life (Humphrey, Wigelsworth, Barlow & Squires, 2013).

5 <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/project-result-content/act1494bc-8a62-49ed-b874-052a75f29859/Early-school-leaving-factsheet.pdf>

6 Please consult our Report The Transition from Primary to Secondary Education to Prevent Early School Leaving from a Diversity Perspective: Context, Interviews & Good Practices (https://567476e3-afa7-4559-a6e4-9a5b05d-04fd2.filesusr.com/ugd/632f44_ba49c41540de4b9f87f29c25d3c50b39.pdf)

IS ESL A COMMON PHENOMENON IN EUROPE?

In 2020, 9.9 % of 18-24 year olds in the EU had completed at most a lower secondary education and were not in further education or training (early leavers).

From an analysis conducted for the purposes of the DREAMS project⁶, the school enrolment rate decreases slightly in the transition from primary to secondary in all partner countries, Spain, Italy and Portugal, and decreases between 13% and 22% for the ages between 15 and 19 years old. However, between 18 and 24 years old, there is a substantial ESTL percentage.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO PAY ATTENTION TO THE TRANSITION FROM PRIMARY TO SECONDARY SCHOOL?

Transition from primary to secondary education is an important stage for a child, since it defines a transcendental change in the life of students: they find themselves in a process of change, adaptation and adjustment both in their relationship towards the education system as well as towards their development and entrance into teenagehood (Ruiz, Castro & Leon, 2010). The lack of adequate tools and guidance within the school community to facilitate this transition can result in an increased chance of Early School Leaving (ESL).



Although the transition from primary to secondary is not the only cause for ESTL, it is an important prevention stage to this problem which posts significant social and economic consequences. At this stage, ESL risk factors are already visible and can be identified with proper protocols.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO TAKE DIVERSITY INTO ACCOUNT DURING THE TRANSITION TO PREVENT ESL?

The rate of ESL is especially worrying among male students and students from foreign backgrounds. This shows that a diversity-based approach has to be introduced in

order to assure intra-system equality at school.

GENDER GAP

In 2020, 11.8 % of young men and 8.0 % of young women in the EU were early leavers from education and training.

The proportion of early leavers from education and training in 2020 in the EU was 3.8 percentage points higher for young men (11.8 %) than for young women (8.0 %). Nearly all EU Member States reported a higher proportion of early leavers for young men than for young women, with particularly large differences — of at least 5.0 percentage points — in Italy, Malta, Cyprus, Portugal and Spain.⁷

MIGRANT GAP

On average across the EU, twice as many young people from the first generation of migrants abandon school early compared to their native peers (26% versus 13%).

In Greece, Spain and Italy more than 40% of young migrants are early school leavers. A few countries such as Portugal, the UK and Norway show lower rates of early school leavers among migrants compared to natives.

In several Member States early school leaving is especially high among disadvantaged minorities such as the Roma population.⁸

BULLYING FACTOR

Among the factors contributing to ESL, bullying represents one of the major ones, as it hurts the victim by provoking psychological effects and sometimes depression disorders. Bullying and cyberbullying victims are at risk of ESL and social marginalisation. Researches proved that victims tend to encounter more difficulties in studying and

7 https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Early_leavers_from_education_and_training#Analysis_by_sex

8 Data are taken from the European Labour Force Survey (LFS), which is conducted in the 27 Member States, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey.

9 Ministero dell'Interno, Abbandono scolastico e bullismo: quali rischi tra i giovani, Programma Operativo Nazionale "Sicurezza per lo sviluppo – Obiettivo Convergenza 2007-2013" Obiettivo Operativo 2.6 "Contenere gli effetti delle manifestazioni di devianza".

they can develop learning difficulties that can potentially lead them to refuse school and eventually drop out (Blaya, 2007, p. 19).⁹

DISABILITIES AND/OR SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS LEARNERS

Young people identified as having SEN or disabilities are at particular risk of ESL. Across the EU, ESL is almost three times higher among people with disabilities than non-disabled people (Limbach-Reich & Powell, 2016, p. 8).

WHAT EMOTIONAL DIFFICULTIES DO CHILDREN FACE DURING TRANSITION?

In Spain, a study conducted with 853 seventh graders indicated that 50% considered the transition from sixth grade to be very rough.

They experienced feelings of difficulty to adapt to the new curricula and to their new relational environment, as well as difficulty with dealing with the loss of friends and a familiar context. An interview to a similar number of sixth graders pointed out that their main worries about the transition to secondary school were academic difficulties (11%), possibility of school failure and grade repetition (13%), and being objects of violence (10,7%). When asked about their expectations, sixth graders expected secondary school to be difficult (21%), cool (13%), and violent (10%). These perceptions are closely tied to the academic performance: a study of 2005 indicated that in sixth grade 93% of students pass, and mostly do it with high grades. However, in seventh grade the percentage of passing students drops to 73%. (Ruiz, Castro & León, 2010).

2. QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS AS SELF-EVALUATION

We suggest parents to take this self-evaluation questionnaire before, during and after their child's transition from primary to secondary school. The survey will help parents identifying their feelings as well as those of their child and his/her needs. It will call for a reflection on warning signs and on where to intervene to support their child. Once completed, it would be essential to share the results with teachers to work together and make the transition as smooth as possible.

1. How much are you informed about your child school life?

- Poorly informed
- Informed
- I am not sure

2. Does your child share with you their feelings about school? If yes, how does he/she feel?

3. Is he/she integrated in his/her classroom?

4. What are your child's strengths (at school, things they can do for themselves, things they like, attitudes, personality traits, etc.)?

5. What are your child's weaknesses? In what does he/she struggle (at school, as well as at personal level)?

6. Do you talk about the transition and the future secondary school?

7. How are you facing this period?

- I am not concerned/anxious because...
- I am concerned because...
- Other



8. How is your child living this period?

- He/she is anxious
- He/she is confident
- He/she is disinterested
- He/she is excited
- Other

9. Who is making the choice for next steps?

- My child/children
- Parent/s
- Together

10. What are your points of reference or the elements you take into account to help your son/daughter in his/her choice?

11. Do you think school is supporting your child in this process?

12. Did your child visited his/her future secondary school already?

13. Does school organised plenty of opportunities for parents to attend workshops and prospective parents evenings in order to find out about relevant information?

14. What is your greatest concern, fear, or nightmare for your child following graduation from primary school?

15. What are your hopes and dreams for your child following graduation from high school?



3. TIPS TO TALK TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT TRANSITION ADDRESSING HIS/HER DIFFICULTIES

If you're wondering how to help a teenager transition and adjust to a new school, you're not alone. Teens are far more independent than younger kids, and they want to be in control of their lives. However, your teen still needs your support and guidance as they face new challenges. Kids begin to think about college, their future, relationships and jobs when they enter high school. Transitioning to secondary school is a big part of growing up. What to do if your child is struggling with the transition? How can you support him/her facing the difficulties and prioritizing his/her interests?

The DREAMS team has some tips for you!

TIP 1: WATCH, TALK, LISTEN

If you noticed your child is struggling with transition, the first thing to do is try to understand the reasons behind. You can't fix a problem unless you understand it first. Observe his/her behaviours, talk with him/her about his/her feelings and worries. Most importantly: be open to listen. You know your child better than anybody else. It's important to act on the warning signs if you start to feel concerned. Look out for a change in things like sleeping or eating habits. Communicate with your child if you've seen these signs.

Maybe s/he needs time to adjust, or s/he is struggling to make friends. Is s/he finding the academic work difficult or does s/he needs more support with independence skills or organisation?

TIP 2: BE INVOLVED

Research finds that parental involvement in education is linked to academic behavioural success, at least in elementary school (Turney, 2009). Harvard Research (Kreider, 2002) describe the importance of parental involvement as:

“First parent's involvement sends the message to their children that education is important; and those children are more likely to value education themselves. Second, parental involvement provides parents with a means of social control; involved parents get to know other parents, teachers, and administration who may then discuss their

children’s performance with them. Lastly, involved parents are privy to information about their children and the administration of their children; if teachers tell children are struggling, parents are in a better position to intervene” (Kreider, 2002).

TIP 3: BE YOUR CHILD’S ALLY

Sit down together with your child and make a list, in order, of the things that are stopping him/her from being happy and settled at school. Finally, help your child with practical things, like preparing for the mornings. Your child might have to get up earlier for middle school than they did for elementary school. Help your child adjust to the new routine.

Try to build bridges with your son/ daughter: get interested in what s/he is doing, open up conversations about what they’re involved in, get them to teach you about the things they’re involved in.

TIP 4: START A POSITIVE DIALOGUE WITH SCHOOL STAFF AND TEACHERS

Ensure your child is “on the radar” of key school staff. We suggest you to be active in the school community. Developing good communication between parents and school is certainly not easy. In fact, it requires efforts from both sides and to be open to receive and give constructive suggestions/critiques.

TIP 5: TRY TO LINK WITH OTHER PARENTS AND SHARE THOUGHTS AND IDEAS

Perhaps other children are experiencing similar difficulties and another parent has found some helpful resources or solutions.

TIP 6. MAKE SURE YOUR CHILD HAS A HAPPY SOCIAL LIFE OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL

This is especially important if your child is struggling to make friends or if you are worried that her choice of school friends is not a good match for her. Ensure you help her to organise get-togethers with friends from her previous school, or peer groups from other areas of her life.

TIP 7: GET EXTRA SUPPORT FOR YOUR CHILD'S WELLBEING

If you can see that your child's mental health is at risk, if you see him/her constantly feeling overwhelmed, take action. S/he will potentially be spending seven years at secondary school. Iron out sources of stress before they take a toll on your child's health.

TIP 8: BE POSITIVE

Let your child know you believe in them, and that they are going to do great. Avoid warning them about how tough secondary school can be because that can only add to their stress.



4. WHERE CAN I FIND HELP/INFORMATION IF MY CHILD IS STRUGGLING WITH TRANSITION?

SPAIN

In Spain, transition from Primary to Secondary school happens between 6th grade - the last year of primary education - and 1st year of Mandatory Secondary School (Educación Secundaria Obligatoria, ESO). This change happens around the time children are 12 years old, which means that the change in the education system coincides with preadolescence, making transition a particularly vulnerable moment for Spanish children. According to Educaweb, a reference online portal in education, 46% of the children suffering bullying in Spain are between 10 and 13 years of age.

If you notice your child struggling prior to, during or after transition, there are different resources to turn to:

- ▶ Addressing the child's tutor in school to discuss any issue or difficulty
- ▶ Finding out of possible programmes and actions that might be implemented in the school and that could be useful

In Educaweb, there is a section for family guidance, where you can explore the different professional profiles and parts of the Spanish education system, as well as make consults to their team of educators and psychologists specialized in education.

As a way to prevent and address situations of bullying, there are apps that have proven useful tools in the Spanish context such as B-Resol, Andrea, and NACE - No al acoso escolar.

ITALY

In Italy, local schools are the main reference point to help supporting children in the transition process. In addition, there are some useful website students and parents can navigate in, like:

- ▶ Io Scelgo Studio Online Platform by MIUR: <https://www.istruzione.it/orientamento/>
- ▶ Orientarsi <https://www.orientamentoistruzione.it/>

MIUR website: <https://www.miur.gov.it/>

PORTUGAL

Portuguese parents can easily access information about transition, learning, bullying, eSafety and other important topics in these websites:

- ▶ Direção geral da educação, to support learning and inclusion: <https://www.dge.mec.pt/educacao-inclusiva>
- ▶ The SeguraNet website of the SeguraNet Awareness Center, which, under the responsibility of the Directorate-General for Education (DGE), has the mission of promoting Digital Citizenship and Education for the Media in Schools: <https://www.seguranet.pt/en>
- ▶ Intersegura, a service based on telephone and online assistance on issues related to the use of online platforms and technologies. The Secure Internet Line thus becomes a specific support of the Integrated Distance Support System (SIAD) of APAV, which will ensure anonymous and confidential support for the use of online technologies, covering all matters related to the use of the previous ones, including relational problems within families or among peers, bullying, as well as experiencing it, if it is unworthy of children and young people. The integration of the Linha Internet Segura in the SIAD, still an articulated response with APAV's proximity services. Link: <https://www.internetsegura.pt/lis/sobre-a-lis>

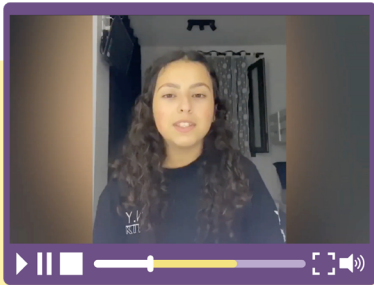
5. IF YOUR CHILD IS DOING THE DREAMS TRIP..

- ▶ Talk to him/her about the trip, about their opinions on the topics addressed and the story they are playing;
- ▶ Motivate him/her to continue this process;
- ▶ Share your enthusiasms for the experience s/he is living;
- ▶ Be ready to talk about the topics addressed, like diversity;
- ▶ Investigate on the difficulties s/he is encountering, if s/he feel shy or if s/he is having problems with their classmates or teachers;
- ▶ Play with him/her at home. Ask your child to teach you something about Forum Theatre and the Theatre of the Oppressed;
- ▶ Share your opinions and feedback with teachers.



ANNEX 1: WHAT KIDS ARE TELLING THEIR FUTURE SELVES

It is often difficult to let teenagers unfold with parents. It is challenging to know their feelings and thoughts, especially related to their education and future. With the DREAMS project, we asked participating students to send a message to their future selves.



Link video:

<https://youtu.be/WRHwbydWCUo>

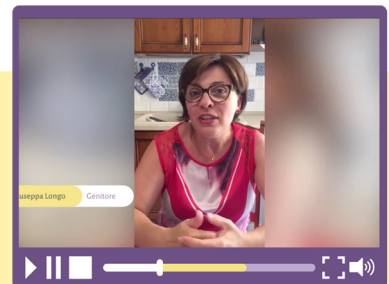
ANNEX 2: PARENTS OPEN UP ABOUT TRANSITION

During the project implementation, we took some interviews with parents from Italy, Spain and Portugal. They shared their hopes and concerns related to their children's transition to secondary school. Their words and experience can be useful for all those parents who are facing this difficult process. All information provided is based on research and piloting experience of the DREAMS project.



Have a look:

<https://youtu.be/acMwhme8vXO>



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