

CroCooS - Prevent dropout! Early Warning System for preventing and reducing dropout from school

Description

CroCooS - Prevent dropout! project identified elements of a comprehensive institutional early warning system (EWS) and tested its applicability in national contexts. The final product of the project is the CroCooS Knowledge Centre, which is a complex system linking closely the Resource Pool (theoretical background in easy-to-understand language), the Guidelines (how to build an institutional EWS) and the EWS-Toolkit (several tools can be used in the school to prevent dropout).

Beneficiaries

 **Early leavers from education and training**

Teachers, school leaders, school care teams, teacher educators, schools, VET-schools

Countries

 **Denmark**

 **Hungary**

 **Netherlands**

 **Serbia**

 **Slovenia**

Education level and sector

-  **Lower secondary education**
-  **Lower secondary vocational education and training (school-based)**
-  **Lower secondary vocational education and training (work-based learning)**
-  **Upper secondary education**
-  **Upper secondary vocational education and training (school-based)**
-  **Upper secondary vocational education and training (work-based learning)**

Vocational Education and Training (VET) (school-based and apprenticeship based)

Type of policy/initiative

 **Intervention**

Intervention

Level of implementation / Scope



Provider level



European level

Institutional level

Stage of implementation



Completed

01 May 2014 - 30 April 2017

Aims of policy/initiative

The aim of the CroCooS project was to contribute to the specification and the application of an institutional early warning system (EWS) for preventing early leaving from education and training through the following activities:

- Identification of elements of EWS and testing its applicability in national pilots focusing on contextual factors affecting the evaluation;
- formulating policy recommendations on the key preconditions in designing and operating an EWS at national level and prerequisites systems should have to set the ground for efficient interventions at the institutional level.

Features and types of activities implemented

The methodology of the pilots was developed in order to support the introduction of an early warning system (EWS) in 15 institutions. During the three years of collaboration, between September 2015 and December 2016, pilots were carried out in Hungarian, Serbian and Slovenian secondary schools.

Pilot schools were supported by international advisors from Denmark and the Netherlands and mentors in building of EWS teams. Pilot schools were provided with an educational toolkit and institutional guidelines to facilitate monitoring of distress signals, creating protocols for intervention at the school level, the use of personal development plans and enhancement of cross-sectoral co-operation.

Implementation tool into account the regional needs by:

- sensitising the staff of each school regarding the importance of the problem of dropping out;
- trying to get teachers to become actively involved in monitoring students and working with them;
- starting work on developing better relationships between students and teachers;
- patiently working on strengthening pupils' sense of belonging to the class and the school;
- developing relationships of trust by being supportive and ensuring a safe school climate;
- promotion of stakeholders' cooperation by various consultations (workshops, PLAs, online forum, social networks).

The main products of the 3 year long project are the pilot implementation process itself,

the RCT-based evaluation and the [policy level recommendations](#) derived from the outcomes. Furthermore, the project also produced international reports based on desk and empirical research and the online knowledge centre (Resource Pool, Guidelines and Toolkit) to help spread methods and ideas to the wider public.

Resources

Project was financed under the Lifelong Learning Programme with total budget of EUR 1,062,000.

Evaluation of the measure

Fieldwork was preceded by empirical and theoretical background research. Accordingly, the project products supporting the pilots were partly based on the findings of a complex research activity including desk research, the creation of country reports and their comparative analysis, study visit reports, conducting online surveys in the three pilot countries, and interviews.

The effectiveness of the pilot activities was assessed in randomized controlled trial (RCT). There was an input and output evaluation carried out in the 5 pilot schools and in the control schools. Detailed reports were used to monitor that the impact of the intervention.

Evidence of effectiveness of the measure

Due to the differences in the pilot countries, the same project and pilot elements produced varied results. The guidelines for implementing early warning systems, the tools for the teachers, the benefits from the mentors and the direct financial support all made progress in Hungary, Serbia and Slovenia.

The evaluation made it clear that the timeframe dedicated for the pilot was not enough. All schools reported that the first few months (even half year) were not spent efficiently due to several reasons (e.g. understanding the problem/ concept, change in the school system and its legal implications, reluctance to participate, even misunderstanding the concept).

The estimated impact of the pilot projects on the improvement of the capacities of schools to prevent dropout had:

- rather positive impact in the perception of reasons for dropout, preparedness of teachers (capacity to recognise distress signals), informal protocols and institutionalisation of cooperation, student monitoring systems, available resources (facilities);
- rather negative impact in the attitudes towards dropout;
- no impact in quality of relationships (trust and access to student information).

The estimated quality of those contextual institutional and systemic conditions that determine the ability for schools in improving their own dropout prevention capacities was:

- rather poor conditions in the preparedness of teachers (instruction and evaluation), availability of resources (specialist), availability of resources (financial resources), availability of necessary professional support services;
- rather medium conditions in the framework for self-evaluation based school development, and availability of necessary professional development opportunities;

rather good conditions in the availability of resources (teachers providing individual support).

Success factors

Most of the stories and the described lessons learned in the [final publication](#) highlight that the project activities improved the

sensitivity of the teachers towards the problem, strengthened their skills in building the necessary trust with their students which can be understood as the first step of change in their school climate that could lead to an inclusive culture in the future.

At school and management level, we could see that the quality of leadership is a key question. So the dropout issue is highly related to leadership and their commitment and training. At the teachers and teams' level, it was obvious from the interviews and especially from the reports that two elements are essential to start an EWS system:

- motivation from the school's side – significant drop-out problem (which might not derive from the perspective of the students but it affects the school, the school's operation and the staff)
- supportive leader, director

Those schools which were motivated, acknowledged ESL as a problem and were committed to reduce it were able to use their previous knowledge and tools and/or develop new ones.

Working in teams was an innovative tool for the staff. Teachers usually work alone, instead of setting up teams and solving problems together. So setting up a team for a specific problem and cooperating to solve it was a learning path for the staff.

Change can be done when there is a step-by-step methodology, ensuring external help and regular consultation. The CroCooS pilot was that kind of help with the mentoring system, with the tools, etc.

The systematic approach of the program was a great asset, together with the external mentors and the financial support. Many programs usually deal with only one or two aspects of a problem, but CroCooS tried to cover all relevant fields which can decrease dropout on school level.

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Related intervention approaches



Identification of learners at risk of early leaving

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