Study: Telling digital stories to fight against early School-Leaving

tellyourstorymap.eu
O1: LITERATURE REVIEW ON TELLING DIGITAL STORIES

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IO1 Study: Telling digital stories to fight against early School-Leaving
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Tell Your Story Project
**Table of Contents**

Table of Contents ..................................................................................................................... 3  
Summary: IO1 Study: Telling digital stories to fight against early School-Leaving ........ 4  
Introduction ............................................................................................................................... 4  
Purpose of this report .................................................................................................................. 6  
Early School Leaving ................................................................................................................ 6  
Factors Affecting ESL ................................................................................................................. 9  
Policies for early leaving from education and training .......................................................... 10  
National reviews ...................................................................................................................... 12  
Early School Leaving in Belgium ............................................................................................ 14  
Early School Leaving in France ............................................................................................... 17  
Early School Leaving in Italy .................................................................................................. 19  
Early School Leaving in Slovenia ........................................................................................... 21  
Early School Leaving in the UK ............................................................................................... 23  
Early School Leaving in other European countries ............................................................. 24  
Early leaver profiles ................................................................................................................ 26  
Successful Education Actions ................................................................................................. 26  
Stories and Storytelling in education ..................................................................................... 34  
Digital Storytelling ................................................................................................................... 37  
Storytelling through maps ........................................................................................................ 39  
Digital storytelling pedagogies ............................................................................................... 40  
Online Tools ............................................................................................................................... 43  
Recommendations .................................................................................................................... 43  
Conclusions ............................................................................................................................... 44  
References ................................................................................................................................. 45  
Annexes .................................................................................................................................... 53
IO1 Study: Telling digital stories to fight against early School-Leaving

“Si vous ne communiquez pas avec des histoires, vous ne communiquez pas. Les faits parlent mais les images font vendre”

“If you don’t communicate with stories, you don’t communicate. Facts speak but images sell”


Summary:
The study lays the foundation for the ensuing development work of the Tell Your Story project. It sums up the results of national and transnational desk-based research activities. The state of the art focuses on three key areas, firstly the current situation regarding prevention of, intervention against, and compensation of early leavers from education and training in the countries participating in the project (FR, AT, BE, SI, UK, IT) and in other European countries and at European level.

Early School Leavers are a non-homogeneous group. The youngsters with difficulties at school are mainly studying in a vocational high school rather than secondary schools. The main causes of dropping out are: i) the school environment, ii) pupil-related such as low levels of performance and family-related like single parenthood.

The research examines some solutions and progress made within the strategic framework Education and Training 2020 and synthesises the present state of research on the potential for story-telling and digital story mapping to engage young people at risk. The report explores policies at different scales, strategies for engagement, the reported use of tools, pedagogical approaches, success stories and concludes with recommendations that influence the rest of the Tell Your Story project.

Introduction
The Tell Your Story Project focuses on young people either leaving school early or at risk of exiting the school system without getting qualifications (Moulin et al., 2014). According to Timmerman et al. (2014), early school leaving (ESL) is a concept created by the European Union, which refers to people aged 18 to 24 who leave education and training without attaining upper secondary qualification or equivalent.

CEDEFOP (2016a) use the commonly adopted Eurostat definition of early leaving from education and training, a term that replaced early school leaving, as the percentage
of the population aged 18 to 24 achieving a lower secondary level of education or less (ISCED 0, 1, 2 and 3c short) and declared as not having received any education or training in the four weeks preceding the EU labour force survey (LFS).

According to Kuran (2013), such young people who leave school before the end of the educational program or before they finish year class, without going to another school or another educational institution are commonly treated as "drop-outs" (Figure 1). They are perceived to be at risk of marginalisation, poverty and economic and social exclusion. Recognising these social implications and the high costs of early drop-out rates meant that reducing the number of early school leavers has become a central theme in the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training, which is known as the Education and Training 2020 (EU Council, 2009), and European Strategies 2020 (European Commission, 2010).

![Figure 1: Early leavers and drop-outs (Cedefop, 2016)](image)

Caruso (2015) considered that dealing with early school leaving should be the concern of all economies. It is for this reason that EU authorities developed the Europe 2020 strategy in order to support youth and to engage young people to develop their own opinions and attitudes about the economy and society. According to the E.C. Staff Working Paper on Reducing ESL (European Commission, 2011a,b), reducing ESL to less than 10% by 2020 is a headline target for achieving a number of key objectives in the Europe 2020 strategy and one of the five benchmarks of the strategic framework for European cooperation in Education and Training 2020.

The plans for Europe 2020 propose three mutual reinforcing priorities: ‘smart growth’ based on knowledge and innovation, ‘sustainable growth’ promoting a greener economy and ‘inclusive growth’ fostering high employment and social cohesion. High rates of ESL are detrimental to the objective of making lifelong learning a reality and a constraint to smart and inclusive growth in Europe.

As a result, under the Lisbon Agenda the target of being the most competitive and socially cohesive region in the world has been set, suggested the rate of ESL should be at or below 10% by 2020 in each EU country.
**Purpose of this report**

The purpose of this state of the art report is to inform the outputs and outcomes of the Tell Your Story Project. In order to do this it examines Early School Leaving as a social and educational issue in an international context. Early leaving from education and training is linked to a vicious cycle of unemployment, social exclusion and poverty, with costs for the individual and society that include reduced levels of economic activity, higher unemployment, poorer health outcomes and demands on State welfare systems.

This report reviews recent research, projects and tools being used in dealing with Early School Leaving, while recognising the strong links between the risk of ESL and lack of engagement with education processes leading to learning difficulties and potential delinquency.

This review examines the potential of storytelling as one of the most ancient forms of education (Marta, 2015), used by every culture on Earth to pass knowledge between individuals and generations. The review explores the emergence of digital media that brought many new possibilities to tell stories, in serious and non-entertainment contexts and examines the possibilities of using digital storytelling with maps to engage young people at risk.

**Early School Leaving**

The concept of Early School Leaving is quite ill-defined. There are many possible meanings, each of which depend on the context where ESL takes place and measures are used.

The EU developed an indicator to monitor progress on early leaving. It has been created as part of a political compromise. It enables EU level comparisons but it is not sufficient to monitor at national and regional levels. The EU definition of early leaving combines three main dimensions: an age parameter of young people (18 to 24), their current status (not in education and training) and a variable about education achievement (completion of upper secondary education). This definition was designed for international comparisons between different education systems across the EU.

The OECD underlines the importance of education in avoiding NEET situations (Not in Education, Employment, or Training), as those early school leavers not finishing secondary education (OECD, 2012a). They are three times more likely to become NEET when compared with young people who progress to tertiary education. NEET rates among migrant youth across the OECD are more than 1.5 times higher than those born in their country of residence. There is also, according to Timmerman et al. (2014), a correlation to be found between educational success and individual’s health status or psychological wellbeing.

The school dropout rate has been decreasing considerably in OECD countries in recent years (OECD, 2016), although some EU countries have seen modest increases. National rates of ESL vary greatly between EU member states and also display significant regional variations within states. Some EU countries like Spain and Portugal...
(Figure 2) have very high levels, while others such as Poland and the Czech Republic ESL is very low.

![Figure 2: The rate of Early School Leaving (OECD, 2014)](image)

The rates of ESL rates across the EU in 2015 are shown in Figure 3 (CEDEFOP, 2016b). Overall there has been a reduction of early-school leaving rate since 2004, but differences between countries remains high, and significant regional variations within states are also evident, which according to Minguez (2013), are primarily dependent on the amount of social spending on education.

![Figure 3: Early School Leaving rates for EU countries (Eurostat, 2015)](image)

Across the EU, young men are more likely to become early school leavers than women. Indeed, this gender gap in ESL persists in all but one member state, and is particularly high in Cyprus, Malta and Portugal. Data from Flanders (Belgium) and Spain suggest
that migrants and ethnic minorities experience higher rates of ESL, as compared to native populations.

Research by Fortin et al. (2006) has tried to identify the typology of early leavers and those who are at risk of early leaving. According to Cedefop (2016a), there are three categories that seek to explain early leaving based on a combination of factors related to young people’s education experience, their emotional and mental well-being, their behaviours and, in some cases, their family background (Figure 4). They all indicate that not all early leavers have low academic performance; some are average in school and others may have even been strong performers in the past.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kronick and Hargis, 1990</th>
<th>Low achievers</th>
<th>Push-outs</th>
<th>Quiet</th>
<th>Non-curricular</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continued failure, truancy, high level of disruptive behaviour</td>
<td>Perceive school as not being for them, frustrated with school and in consequence rebellious</td>
<td>Low achievers with continued failure but don’t show disruptive behaviours</td>
<td>Their problems lie outside of school (drugs, alcohol, abuse, poverty, health)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Janosz et al. 2000</th>
<th>Maladjusted</th>
<th>Low achiever</th>
<th>Disengaged</th>
<th>Quiet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High level of misbehaviour (many sanctions, high truancy). Poor school performance. Weak commitment to education.</td>
<td>Weak commitment to education. Average to low levels of misbehaviour. Very poor school performance.</td>
<td>Average to low level of school misbehaviour (disciplinary sanctions). Low commitment to school (do not like it, don’t care about grades, little aspirations). Average performance (but actually compared to their low personal investment in education their performance is quite good).</td>
<td>No evidence of school misbehaviour. Moderate to high level of commitment to education (positive views about school, no major problems with absenteeism). Average to poor performance. Generally go unnoticed until they decide to leave.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fortin et al., 2006</th>
<th>School and social adjustment difficulties</th>
<th>Uninterested in school</th>
<th>Depressive</th>
<th>Antisocial covert behaviour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low academic performance. High behaviour problems. Delinquency. High level of depression. Teachers have very negative attitudes towards them. Low level of family cohesion, support, organisation.</td>
<td>Slightly high depression levels. Good academic performance but lack of motivation and experience boredom. Teachers have very positive attitudes towards them. Good social skills. Functional family</td>
<td>Average grades. Low incidence of behaviour problems. Teachers have positive attitudes towards them. Very high level of depression. Very low level of family cohesion, support, organisation – high level of parental control.</td>
<td>Good academic performance. Teachers have very positive attitudes towards them. Antisocial behaviours (lying, fighting, theft, vandalism). High level of depression. Low level of family cohesion, support, organisation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4: Characteristics of early leavers (Cedefop, 2016)
Factors Affecting ESL

“School failure is not the consequence of only one cause, but from a combination and addition of various obstacles and disadvantages preventing the path of the pupils all along their lives” (OECD, 2012b)

Scientists, educators and policy makers have started to look for common characteristics of early school leavers, on the basis of which might indicate the potential risk factors. Much of the research tends to focus on avoiding the stereotyped views of those who have dropped out.

Minguez (2013) examines the situation of early-school leaving in six different countries: Germany, Denmark, Spain, Finland, Belgium and the UK, studying the “impact of investment in education, gender, ethnic and family background” in ESL. The research showed there are big differences between the countries but recently there is a more nuanced understanding of early leaving, with the interaction of family, individual and policy factors found to shape a gradual process of disengagement from school and depending on the amount of social spending on education.

Many factors can cause the ESL phenomenon. Cedefop (2016a) suggest there are four groups of them:

1. Factors related to the individual and their family background
2. Factors related to education and training
3. Factors related to employment
4. Other factors – like changing school, moving home

The Cedefop study focuses on the contribution that vocational education and training (VET) can make in reducing ESL. They highlight the need for better data and its systematic use for shaping targeted policy to tackle early leaving.

EL-Mahdi and Mouillet (2016) examine the characteristics of schools to explain their role in the dropout rate. They confirm ESL is more frequent in vocational secondary schools than in general and technical secondary schools and they attempt to understand the causes of early-school leavers in order to prevent early-school leaving. They identify 4 different categories of early-school leavers as i) the unexpected, as they have a similar profile as the non-ESL, ii) the disengaged, who do not graduate, iii) the abandoned, who are predominantly male and iv) the expected, where dropping out is predictable.

Parents are one of the main factors that ensure and influence the harmonious development of children. Tomiță and Panzaru (2013) analyse the role of parenting on Early School Leaving in 27 European Unions countries and assess the impact of family policies on children’s academic success. They address two components related to the environment in which the child develops: the affective component (given by the constant presence of the parent in early life) and the economic component (given by the financial support the family benefits from). They suggest that the physical presence of parents with children and their active involvement is essential in child development, with long-term impact on behaviour that develops.

In terms of the variables that characterise the economic environment in which the child develops, only family or child allowance proved to be a predictor of early school leaving (Tomiță and Panzaru, ibid). In affective terms, the longer the parental leave
was, the more the ESL rate decreased. This demonstrates that constant, prolonged interaction with children does have an effect on how they relate to school. This research suggests that in order to reduce ESL, the duration of parental leave and the level of family and child allowance should be elements to be taken into account in drawing up family policies.

Tumino and Taylor (2015) assess the impact of local labour market on Early School Leaving. They suggest that when there are relatively high levels of unemployment, the demand for education increases and the level of ESL is reduced, as education is perceived to significantly improve employment chances. Family resources and the environmental conditions in which the children are raised influence school leaving decisions, so local labour market conditions matter mainly in cases of young people from disadvantaged socio economic groups. They suggest that economic recovery policies should also seek to increase the expected net gains from education for young people, and from lower socio-economic groups in particular.

Cedefop (2016a) assess the factors that influence early leaving among VET students. These may involve similar conditions to schools such as prior education failure (class repetition), lower socio-economic background, migration background, and disability. But many early leavers from VET do not have these characteristics and leave prematurely for other reasons, more specific to VET, such as:

(a) VET is a second choice and often not a positive one
(b) lack of a positive perspective for their own education
(c) negative perception of their own capacities, often linked to past failures
(d) mismatch between expectations of a VET programme or profession and its reality,
(e) less practical tuition than expected and
(f) specific issues linked to apprenticeships, like the maturity to integrate in a company or the basic skills to convince an employer to hire them; the availability of placements; working conditions and remuneration.

Burman et al. (2013) confirm ESL is the end point of a long and complex process whereby the youngster increasingly retreats from education and training. In this process individual as well as institutional factors may play a role. The school situation can enhance or reduce the rate of early leavers.

**Policies for early leaving from education and training**

The rise of early school leaving is a multi-level political issue concerning European, national and local level policy (Magalhães et al. 2015). Every country is capable of taking measures against school failure and low performance of the pupils regardless of their economic and cultural environment (OECD, 2012b). National goals and policies of EU Member States in the field of early dropout rates have been formed mainly on the basis of recommendations of Council of the EU on policies to reduce early school leaving.

The importance of this issue for EU policy makers is apparent when looking closely at the EU 2020 strategy. The decrease of the EU wide ESL rates is part of the main targets
of this strategy for a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy (European Commission, 2010). However, even though reducing early school leaving rates is presented as a main EU target this does not imply the different EU member states adopt a similar viewpoint and approach. In some countries, such as Poland, early school leaving is not the commonly used terminology and does not seem to be a policy issue, while in the case of the UK policy attention is focused more on the category of NEETs (young people not in education, employment or training).

Despite these differences, one recurring issue shared by all formal educational systems across Europe is how they deal with the processes of declining school engagement apparent among various socially vulnerable groups, including recent migrants. This was addressed as part of a Framework 7 research project “Reducing Early School Leaving in Europe” (http://RESL.eu), nine European countries participated with the aim to generate as much as possible innovative cross-country and cross-case insights. They concluded that Early School Leaving (ESL) is a multifaceted and complex problem caused by a cumulative process of disengagement. It is a result of personal, social, economic, education or family-related reasons. Schools play an important role in addressing ESL but they should not work in isolation. Comprehensive approaches are required that focus on the root causes.

The study Reducing Early School Leaving in the European Union (GHK, 2011), classifies the policy measures in school dropout situations into i) prevention strategies, ii) reintegration strategies and iii) recovery strategies. The first seeks to frame and guide, the second, anticipates the incidence of the phenomenon, and the latter reintegrates students in school dropout situations. However, successful educational strategies to lower rates of ESL, increase inclusion and social cohesion should be based on investing in evidence-based policies and practices.

Based on the work of the Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving (European Commission 2013), the following key policy messages were identified for successful policies against ESL.

1. Ensure long-term political and financial commitment to reducing ESL and keep it high on the political agenda.
2. Ensure children and young people are at the centre of all policies aimed at reducing ESL. Ensure their voices are taken into account when developing and implementing such policies.
3. Develop and implement a sustainable national strategy to reduce ESL. This strategy should address all levels of education and training and encompass the right mixture of preventative, intervention and compensation measures.
4. Invest in the knowledge base of ESL, through regular and timely collection of accurate data and information. Ensure that data and information on ESL is accessible and used effectively in policy development. Ensure that the monitoring and evaluation of ESL measures steers policy development.
5. Ensure policy development and implementation is based on strong, long-term cooperation between national, regional/ local authorities and stakeholders, as well as between different policies, through for example establishing coordinating body.
6. Remove obstacles within the school education system that may hinder young people in completing upper secondary education. Ensure smooth transition
between different levels of education. Ensure access to high quality education throughout life (including early childhood education and care), and the provision of high quality Vocational Education and Training (VET).

7. Support schools to develop conducive and supportive learning environments that focus on the needs of individual pupils. Promote a curriculum that is relevant and engaging.

8. Promote and support multi-professional teams in schools to address ESL.

9. Support cooperation between schools, local communities, parents and pupils in school development and in initiatives to reduce ESL. Promote strong commitment from all stakeholders in efforts to reduce ESL at local levels, including local businesses.

10. Promote a better understanding of ESL in initial education and continuous professional development for all school staff, especially teachers. Enable staff to provide differentiated learning support for pupils in an inclusive and individualised way.

11. Strengthen guidance to ensure young people are aware of the different study options and employment prospects available to them. Ensure counselling systems provide young people with both emotional and practical support.

12. Reinforce accessibility to second chance schemes for all young people. Make second chance schemes distinctive and ensure they provide a positive learning experience. Support teachers who work in second chance schemes in their specific role.

National reviews

As part of the RESL.eu project, Ryan et al. (2014) undertook a comparative analysis of nine countries. They assessed the development and implementation of education policies and political instruments dealing with ESL after the Lisbon Strategy and building towards achieving the targets of the EU 2020 Strategy (Figure 5). They take into account the interactions of supranational, national and local institutions involving the reconfiguration of educational governance and regulation. Their analysis showed that the definition, steering and implementation of policies and public actions were informed mainly by the international setting and involved multi-scale governance (super-national, national and sub-national) by many stakeholders in the country. They say that Europeanisation of national policies has taken place on the basis of the countries’ diverse interpretation and implementation of common definitions and set within the framework of funding programs of cooperation, support, research and development.

The goals, ‘drivers’ and rationales underpinning education and social policies related to ESL suggest that in all nine countries economic concerns prevail over educational and social goals. There are close relationships between social and economic policies, on the one hand, and educational policies, on the other. In line with the Lisbon Strategy, education is pointed out simultaneously as a factor of economic competition and a factor of social cohesion. Even if an EU influence on ESL policies and measures is neither visible nor recognised by some actors, the ‘soft’ introduction and
development of EU ideas is present in all countries involved and reshaped the ways in which different countries address the educational issues of ESL and seek to make the best of EU funding schemes to develop and implement its ideas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Goals/Drivers</th>
<th>Rationales</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Belgium     | • youth employment and labour market insertion; being competitive in the current knowledge economy  
• reducing social stratification and enhancing social mobility opportunities | • economic competitiveness  
• social justice                                                                        |
| United Kingdom | • reducing youth unemployment/NEET figures by raising attainment and improving young people’s labour market opportunities | • assumption of direct link between educational outcomes and labour market opportunities  
• free market principles in education as a mechanism for raising attainment |
| Sweden      | • increasing competences to adjust to the labour market by means of vocational tracks and skills directed at children and youth with social problems, disabilities and migrants | • adjustment to the labour market  
• reduction of social inequalities and social exclusion |
| Portugal    | • lowering the age of vocational training in education for the school “less able” populations  
• reducing costs in education | • reinforcement of the link between education and the labour market within a neo-meritocratic conservative view |
| Netherlands | • reducing social exclusion, youth unemployment and invest in knowledge economy | • increase quality of education,  
• reinforcement of the link between education and the labour market |
| Poland      | • equal access to universal, uniform and free education  
• ESL as not a priority of educational policy | • ESL as a problem of specific groups  
• reinforcement of the link between education and the labour market within a neo-meritocratic conservative view  
• reduction of social exclusion and inequalities |
| Spain       | • improving graduation rates at the end of compulsory education  
• reducing youth unemployment | • ESL not seen as the main problem of youth education  
• major concern about NEET youth |
| Hungary     | • improving graduation rates at the end of compulsory education  
• reducing youth unemployment | • ESL as a problem of specific groups |
| Austria     | • improving education/training conditions and increasing qualification levels of disadvantaged children/youth  
• youth employment and labour market insertion | • fight social exclusion, poverty and inequality of educational opportunities  
• reduction of follow-up costs (economic and social) due to inadequate education |

Figure 5: Policy goals, drivers and rationales in 9 EU countries (Ryan et al., 2014)
Minguez (2013) examines the complexity of education systems and Early School Leaving in six different countries: Germany, Denmark, Spain, Finland, Belgium and the UK, studying the impact of investment in education, gender, ethnic and family background in early-school leaving. There are big differences between the countries, depending on social spending on education. In Sweden, Denmark and Finland, a comprehensive education system exists with the highest investment in education in Europe. In Germany, France and the Netherlands, there is an inclusive and selective education system with a strong emphasis on vocational training. In the UK and Ireland, a particular emphasis is placed on young peoples’ personal responsibility to pursue their own welfare by means of rapid and stable insertion into the job market. In Spain, Greece, Portugal, Italy, there is a rigid education system. In Germany, Austria and Denmark, there is strong difference between academic and vocational education, the latter being an opportunity for potential drop out pupils, but then with limitations in the educational pathway.

**Early School Leaving in Belgium**

According to Statistics Belgium (2017), the number of early school leavers in Belgium had declined from 13,8% in 2000 to 8,8% in 2016. However there were still some inequalities as early school leaving affected more men (10,2%) than women (7,4%) and regionally, in Flanders the amount was lowest (Figure 6): 6,8% (men 8,5%, women 5,1%), and worst in Brussels 14,8% (men 16,3%, women 13,5%).

![Figure 6: Percentage of young people aged 18 to 24 in 2014 who left school early, are no longer in school or in a training course, and who have no more than a lower secondary diploma, according to gender, in Belgium and regions (Sacco et al., 2016)](image_url)
The key indicator, which appears to be important to Early School Leaving is the educational deprivation indicator (onderwijs kansarmoeide-indicator, OKI). This involves the following student characteristics:

- the language that the student speaks in the family;
- the mother's educational level;
- the area where the student lives and
- whether the student is receiving an education allowance.

Early school leavers tend to have more of these characteristics present. The level of education shows differences. ESL is lowest in ASO (general education) and TSO (technical education), but most in BSO (vocational) and DBSO (part-time vocational education) where it is more than 50%. The nationality of the leaver is important, it is least ESL with Belgians and most with non-European non-Belgians (migrants). The mother tongue at home is important, least where solely Dutch is spoken at home. The education level of the mother also shows a clear correlation.

In Flanders, the regional government has competence over education policy including actions that were taken specifically to combat ESL and youth unemployment. These can be clustered into two main categories: (i) a focus on concrete actions that directly target students leaving education without an upper secondary education degree, and (ii) a focus on the structures and particular educational pathways that are more indirectly linked to tackling ESL.

As part of the «Reducing Early School Leaving in Europe» (RESL.eu) research project Clycq et al. (2015a) assess the tensions between a social equity and an economic rationale underlying the debate on how to tackle early school leaving, answering these questions:

(1) Is early school leaving an issue discussed by educational stakeholders in Flanders and to what extent does the EU policy context influence Flemish educational policy regarding ESL?

Flanders to a large extent adopts the EU policy initiatives by implementing its policy frameworks and vocabulary. The Flemish action plan for tackling ESL takes on the EU policy framework developed and disseminated by the EU Commission’s thematic working group on tackling ESL by phrasing and classifying 50 concrete actions according to the main headings and concepts in the EU Commission’s report: i.e., identification and monitoring, coordination of policies, prevention, intervention and compensation.

(2) What are the main rationales underlying Flemish strategies to tackle ESL?

Although the first two years in secondary education are often presented as being comprehensive, students are already enrolled in an A-track or a B-track. The B-track is primarily for students that leave primary education without having attained specific developmental or curricular objectives and were advised to enter secondary education based on age difference with other pupils in primary education. Data shows that those students starting secondary education in the B-track will predominantly follow the vocational pathway and have a much lower probability to finish secondary education with an educational qualification, thus ESL.
There are specific structural risk factors of the Flemish hierarchical educational tracking system. Many students and their parents choose to start secondary education in the higher status track of general education, but they are reoriented to lower status tracks in vocational education. It is important to consider these structures and resulting educational practices are important in relation to the negative educational experiences of a large proportion of students (e.g., regarding grade retention and reorientation to different tracks), which have been shown to increase the risk of ESL.

Clycq et al. (2015b) comment that educational issues are often heavily politicised in Flanders, and in particular concerning the fundamental restructuring of secondary education. Research shows that strong social and ethnic inequalities persist (Nicaise et al., 2014). They confirm the structural characteristics of education are important in determining educational practices in relation to negative educational experiences of a large proportion of students, which have been shown to increase the risk of ESL (Lamote et al., 2014).

In Flanders, a work-based vocational track was partly designed as a policy strategy to prevent ESL and compensate for it by offering students an opportunity to acquire some work-experience starting from the age of 15. However, in practice for many students this track became the final stop before leaving education without an upper secondary qualification (European Commission, 2014) and especially for the main at risk groups such as boys, students with another home language than Dutch and/or with an immigration background and those from lower SES families.

Clycq et al. (2015b) discuss the main viewpoints of Flemish policy makers towards EU and regional policy initiatives in tackling ESL and the competing drivers underlying these initiatives on Early School Leaving. The Flemish Qualifications Structure (FQS) remains very rigid and non-transparent. It does not allow a clear translation of all different types and levels of professional qualifications within the secondary education structure. ESL is still conceived as a central problem for the future labour market prospects of youngsters in Flanders, in other words unemployment, rather than a result of social conditions or the quality of education.

As a result, in Flanders great emphasis has been placed upon the detection and monitoring of early signals of disengagement measured through the truancy behaviour of students. With this aim, the Minister of Education launched in 2006 a Truancy Action Plan to combat rising numbers of truants (Flemish Ministry of Education and Training, 2006). The aim was to design a holistic and contextualised approach of the phenomenon of truancy. In 2012 the new Minister designed an updated Truancy plan with more detection and monitoring and with a stronger focus on raising awareness, prevention, supervision and repression. Local policy makers received more power on this issue and from September 2012 onwards all enrolments, school changes, presences and absences during the entire school year were monitored more closely. Although the underlying rationale is that truancy and school changes need to be approached from a holistic perspective, the focus on the individual pupil and his parents that need to be held accountable remains central in the policy discourses.

A holistic approach is also stressed in EU policy documents, arguing that only comprehensive plans can have long term effects in tackling ESL. In Autumn 2013 the
Flemish Government drafted a Flemish Action Plan on Early School Leaving. This plan strongly adopts the EU policy framework and concepts in tackling ESL and presents a Flemish plan that stresses the identification and monitoring of ESL and the development of different prevention, intervention and compensations measures. This resulted in 50 concrete actions, often subdivided in more specific actions, various stakeholders from the educational field, the labour market and civil society actors can, or sometimes are obliged to, adopt. More structural actions, for instance through apprenticeships focused on providing an alternative learning pathways for youngsters who do not fit in well with the general provision of school-based learning and/or are attracted by workplace learning. Current studies show that ESL is strongly concentrated in part-time vocational tracks, mainly due to hierarchical structure of the Flemish system. The main focus remains on opening up the workplace learning opportunities to more students in a vocationally oriented study track and to increase the quantity and quality of apprenticeship opportunities.

As a result, Flanders adopts many of the EU proposed education policy recommendations, in particular with respect to ESL. However, the topic of early tracking is one aspect Flanders has not been eager to adopt (European Commission, 2013). Nor has the region adopted more holistic reform plans that provide more flexible educational pathways. According to Nouwen et al. (2014) the Flemish Government, is enthusiastic about broader EU education policy, but there is some discussion about Flanders being too eager to be an early adopter of EU education policy.

Sacco et al. (2016) examine the situation of youth in Brussels, a region of very high ESL compared with the rest of the country. They underline the high level of inequality in terms of access to education in the region. They suggest the strong presence of ‘ghetto’ schools as well as ‘elitist schools’, which contributes to the ethnic and social segregation in the school system. This is exacerbated by unequal access to employment as well as discrimination in recruitment.

Several indicators highlight the issues for young people, such as the proportion of students who are “behind” in their schooling. In Brussels, the figures are alarming, as 50% of students in the first year of secondary are already at least one year behind. There are social inequalities reinforced by the school system as demonstrated by the study conducted by Pitts and Porteous (2006) that showed Brussels youth from minority backgrounds experience many problems with respect to integration: a higher rate of early school leaving, poorer academic performance and a higher rate of unemployment.

**Early School Leaving in France**

In France, in 2013 the unemployment rate of early-school leavers reaches 50% (El-Mahdi and Moullet, 2016). However Moulin et al. (2014) describe how the notion of dropout is different in France when compared with other countries. The concept includes not only the young people leaving the educational system without a diploma, but also young people in difficult situations who need help and guidance, sometimes referred to as school failure, and difficult teenagers absent from school before the legal age, or school interruption.
The OECD (2012a) suggested particular attention needs to be paid to pupils in disadvantaged situations in order to combat school failure and dropping out. They suggest educational policies should be used help to break the link between the socio-economic background and educational success. A number of issues have been addressed, for instance reducing the ‘repetition’ of classes by implementing strategies based on individual support and catch-up opportunities; increasing the choice of courses, with the introduction of a new guidance system in all colleges and high schools since the beginning of 2009; providing more choices in selecting schools, but also ensuring well considered institutions take disadvantaged students and make their facilities available for low-income families.

Weixler and Soudoplatoff (2015) describe the French national plan launched on November 21st, 2014 by the French Prime Minister Manuel Valls and the Minister of Education Najat Vallaud Belkacem, to defeat the dropouts. It includes several initiatives including the mobilization of educational teams in institutions, the development of links with families, strengthening partnerships at all levels (national, regional, local) to foster collaboration between institutions, communities, associations, companies, etc. and the establishment of the right to return to training.

The situation of early dropouts was taken into consideration rather later in France than other countries (Landès and Lefeuvre, 2014). The government started to tackle this issue because of the difficulty of social and professional inclusion of young people without qualifications, school attendance became obligatory and the concern about public order and security.

They report on the Early School Leavers Taskforce that acts in secondary schools. Where special coordinators (teachers) without any specific training are allocated responsibility in order to be able to help young people dropping out of school. This was based on a skills and competences framework based on the profile necessary for working with youngsters at risk of dropping out. The only tangible aspect of their work is the activities and practices they develop with the young. Their mission is to get the young people focused on their image and their involvement and not on their knowledge.

New mechanisms have been created for the reception of dropouts throughout the country. The aim is to increase the downward trend in the number of dropouts. The National Education system is committed to increasing the possibility of carrying out initial training courses that give young people temporary alternative experiences, either through internships, civic service etc. while retaining their student status. There are also back-to-school structures, such as micro-lycées, second chance schools, and so on developed in complementarity with E2C and Epide (CGET, 2016), as well as voluntary military service and certain actions carried out by companies who would host dropout youngsters. The common objective is for the minors to keep their pupil status and develop a more inclusive educational care of the young person whether they are being educated or not.

Another measure put in place is to have a temporary reception to prepare the young person who is ready to resume a training course while focusing on a socialization goal. Another tool developed are online platforms for monitoring and supporting dropouts with the objective of ensuring that young drop-outs over 16 years of age are identified
and offered the best supporting conditions for a return to school or the successful integration into society by benefitting from the fundamental right of access to knowledge and training.

Boudesseul (2014) underlines the importance of the “innovation” and “experimentation” in the dropout field, stimulated by the Ministry of Education. The Ministry fosters innovation through calls for proposals, with a variety of partnerships, where not only schools are involved, but also public administration, NGOs and associations. A large number of topic areas have been supported, including orientation, health, professional inclusion, social and spatial inclusion in the city or rural area and judiciary protection.

The OECD (2016) examine the situation of NEETs in France. They are considered young people, 15-29 years old, who are not in education, employment or training. The number has increased in recent years in France, from less than 14% in 2008 to 16.9% in 2012. NEET rates among migrant youth across the OECD are 1.6 times higher than those born in their country of residence, but the gap is even larger in France, where NEET rates are more than 1.8 times higher for migrant youth. So, ESL is three-times more likely among migrants in France when compared with native-born youngsters.

Four education challenges for French policy makers were identified by the OECD (2015):

1. to make the educational system fairer, supporting disadvantaged people and schools, for instance they suggested teachers with experience should get incentives to work in disadvantaged schools.

2. to fight against school failure from an early age, to help the pupils in reading and in getting the basics from the start of mandatory schooling. They recommend to keep starting school at 2 years old and to focus on teaching a common set of core skills, to limit to repeat a year while personalizing the teaching and encouraging differentiated learning.

3. to improve the quality of teaching and the transmission of knowledge in primary and secondary schools, and reassert the values of the teacher. They suggest France should build capacity among teachers in teaching methodologies, to develop lifelong learning for teachers and establish a quality assurance system.

4. to enhance the quality and the valorisation of vocational pathway in high schools, so it is not oriented to pupils with poor performance. Teaching in vocational education should be enhanced. The suggestedFrance should strengthen the academic demand of vocational education, to make possible for the pupils to gain better skills and have access to tertiary education via a vocational route and to make sure teachers have a solid professional experience, with quality teaching methods.

**Early School Leaving in Italy**

In Italy, the proportion of early school leavers is high by European Union standards even though the rate of early leavers has decreased over recent years (from 19.2% in 2009 to 15% in 2014). As a result of Law no. 296 of December 27, 2006, both the school leaving age and the minimum age to access the labour market were raised to 16 years.
Besides the Eurostat definition of early leavers, in Italy the concept of ‘at-risk of drop-out’ is also used for students who leave school education during the academic year without any official communication with an educational institution.

In 2013, 17% of the whole population aged 18-24 did not achieve any qualification beyond the 3C ISCED Level (“Scuola Secondaria Inferiore”), while the EU member countries average school drop-out rate was 13,5% and Italy was in fifth worst position in the EU. However, ESL is not uniformly distributed across the country: in Southern regions, it is almost double that of the Centre-Northern area. Dropping out is most severe in Sicily or Sardinia (25 and 25,1% respectively), while it is least in regions such as Umbria and Emilia-Romagna (11,6% and 13,9% respectively).

Looking at the Eurydice study (European Commission, 2014), dropping out is also a gendered phenomenon, affecting 20,2% of the male population aged 18-24 in Italy when compared with 13,7% of the female population (EU28 13,6% males, 10,2% females). Again this is not uniformly distributed across the country, as in Southern regions it is almost double that of the Centre-Northern area.

Among several determinants is the role played by family origin. According to Aina, Casalone and Ghinetti (2015) youths born in the Centre-North with both parents from Southern Italy, in other words second generation internal migrants, behave similarly to those born and living in the South. For this reason, they are more likely to leave education earlier than comparable individuals born in the Centre-North with parents from the same area.

In Italy, 34,4% of students who do not get any school-leaving certificate was born abroad, while among native students this percentage decreases at 14,8%.

Across Europe, several countries have a national strategy in place that has as one objective to reduce early leaving from education or training, or they are in the process of adopting one, but in Italy there is no comprehensive strategy to tackle early leaving.

The Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) is currently working on merging in a single framework, all the structural measures already implemented to tackle this issue. Following a series of initiatives already undertaken:

- intervention and economic measures against drop-out, such as integrative teaching in compulsory education in the areas with higher risk of drop-out and the extension of school timetable for groups of students;
- implementing extra-curricular activities in the afternoon (sportive, cultural, artistic and leisure activities);
- increasing flexibility of the education system through the full integration and recognition of non-formal and informal pathways within the education system;
- reorganising the adult education system: Former centres and evening classes will merge into the new Centres for Adult Education (CPIA) providing young people and adults with personalised learning paths for obtaining lower and upper secondary education qualifications. Centres will also offer literacy courses and Italian language courses to foreign adults;
- integrating classes in institutes for the detention of minors and adults.
- targeted measures for groups at risk (socially disadvantaged, migrants and Roma backgrounds and students with special educational needs).
**Early School Leaving in Slovenia**

With the growing number of people with completed tertiary education and low ESL Slovenia has reached the national targets for Europe 2020. However, the proportion of tertiary education graduates among the unemployed is increasing, which suggests problems with youth employability. The proportion of young people (aged 15-24), who are not employed or included in education or training is low by European standards (9.5% in 2015), but has been consistently rising since 2008.

Early School Leaving in Slovenia is a rare phenomenon, which in 2015 accounted only for 5% of young people aged from 18 to 24. This percentage is the second lowest in the EU and represents less than half of the EU average (11% in 2015). Data for children born abroad are less reliable, but suggest that early school leaving thereof is a much more extensive (16.5%). As elsewhere in the EU early school leaving is more common among men (6.4%) than among women (3.4%).

Slovenia has developed a two-stage action plan to facilitate the integration of refugees and migrants in education. In accordance with this plan, all children of migrants (before the start of training) take a course of Slovenian language. During the training they attend extra hours of Slovenian language, fully integrated into the regular school program.

In Slovenia, the employment rate for those who have recently finished high school education is 69.7%, which is lower than the EU average (73.9%).

Kuran (2013) confirmed Slovenia has the second lowest dropout rate in the EU and the degree of post-secondary education is above the EU average. Slovenia has ensured conditions in which almost all youngsters continue their education in secondary education after compulsory primary school education. There is also an increasing number continuing to the tertiary level. Regarding access to education, Slovenia when compared with other European countries shows relatively favourable picture in terms of both indicators: involvement and the impact of socio-economic situation in the educational opportunities of young people (Rakar, 2009).

Rakar (ibid) compares the movement of young people in various forms of education in European countries and the success of young people at different levels of study. Separate emphasis was placed on the analysis of the social dimension in education. The data showed that the involvement of people in education and educational attainment has been an important step.

Compared with other European countries, Slovenia has allocated significant resources to education and the country has regularly been near the top of the list for the successful completion of secondary education (OECD, 2008) with 97% of the population in the age group 18-19 years finishing high school education in comparison with 86% for the corresponding European average.

Kuran (2013) suggests the fact that many young people drop-out of school before obtaining their certificate in upper secondary education is evidence for an educational deficit that can have serious long-term consequences in terms of unemployment. Particular emphasis has been placed on applying non-formal education in Slovenia, especially in solving the problem with drop-outs. Resources from the European Social Fund (ESF) were allocated to stimulate the return of early school leavers into the
school system or the labour market. Other projects were supported to prevent early drop-outs: PUPO (preventive action for preventing drop-out), ISM (Information and advice for young people), which established a counselling network aimed at young people who ‘Stepped Out’ of the school system. Additionally, those who do not successfully complete the training can obtain a certificate NVQ (National Vocational Qualification), which allows them to enter the labour market. A formal system (called Nefiks) was established for recording non-formal skills.

Bezjak (2014) undertook a qualitative survey of school leavers in Slovenia. The results showed that personal factors were as important as institutional factors, including the method of teaching in schools. This was similar to findings from extensive surveys among school leavers (Beltram et al., 2014), where young people gave as their main reasons for leaving secondary school as the lack of will and perseverance; the mismatch between school, work and family obligations; inadequate ways of teaching in school; and the lack of time for learning. Young people considered interesting pedagogical approaches were necessary that would be interactive, picturesque, practical and individualized, established according to their needs and interests. These are also approaches that engage and stimulate young people and encourage their desire to be actively involved in their own learning.

An early study by Marinšek (2001) confirmed that satisfaction with their work strengthened self-confidence and would create a sense of satisfaction with life. Hence a professional role was an important element in shaping an individual's identity. The work of the young people is therefore the basis for survival, material and spiritual existence, the exercise needs of professional maturity and assume full responsibility for oneself and society.

Dropouts can be justified because of the disparities between the student interest for a specific occupation or study and their real possibility to integrate in their desired program. Therefore, often students who enrol in other programs available to them have little motivation for the education that is provided. Education for unemployed young people should be based on creation of personality characteristics.

In Slovenia the "Youth 5000" project was set up in 1998. It included 6189 unemployed persons (61.9 % of women). The most represented group (58%) were those without vocational or professional education. The program sought to prevent long-term unemployment, so every unemployed person should make a fresh start in a job or training before the end of the year. This was related to a 'Second Chance School' programme, based on a local partnership with cooperation between the representatives of local authorities and partner companies, non-profit organizations / experts in the fields of health, social problems, school and young people as equal and responsible partners. In general, through high-quality and largely individualized education programs in schools and training in partner companies, school leavers seek to recover their self-confidence, strengthen communication and social skills. The program motivates them to learn, to recognize their true abilities and interests, and expand basic knowledge. Kotnic (2004) indicates more than 5000 young people were included in this Second Chance School Programme and only a small percentage didn't complete it (6 %).
The ‘Project learning for young adults’ was designed to give young people (between 15 and 25 years of age), who for various reasons have dropped out of school and thus remained without a (professional) education, and in the labour market without suitable certificates and with inadequate experience, help to return to social life and the education arena. The results showed the majority of school leavers involved in the program engaged back to the educational process, while achieving excellent results in the field of general education and professional identity and in particular in their personality.

To summarize these findings, teachers said the biggest obstacles for successful education of unemployed young people were psychosocial and personality characteristics. The lack of education was not considered to be so important.

**Early School Leaving in the UK**

Data on ESL in the UK is hard to find. It may be represented in terms of ‘retention rate’ or ‘participation’. According to Ryan Et al. (2014) the UK policy discourse interprets the role of education primarily from a labour market perspective and tends to define problematic and/ or vulnerable youth predominantly in terms of their labour market outcomes. Therefore, the youth policy agenda focuses on young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs).

Reducing ESL has not been an explicit aim of education reforms in the UK, and the term ESL is hardly mentioned in policy. However, this issue has mainly been addressed by raising the participation age to 17 in 2013, then to 18 in 2015. Participation does not have to be in full time education; alternative options include work-based learning, including apprenticeships, and part-time education for those employed, self-employed or volunteering.

The UK government has also introduced a new initiative to raise test results specifically in Mathematics and English, whereby students who fail to achieve a grade C in the GCSE will be required to continue studying these subjects until 18 years old, even after they progress on to the next stage of study. There also is a push to equip young people with in-demand skills through reform of the apprenticeship program. However, raising the importance of examination results appears to reinforce the importance of formal, academic rather than vocation and informal qualifications.

In 2010 the most severe cuts to the education budget in over fifty years were announced. The 16-19 age group was one of the most affected sectors in these reforms. For example the very successful Education Maintenance Allowance scheme was cancelled and spending on further education and youth services - including careers guidance – was reduced.

Ross and Leathwood (2013) suggest there is a 'blame the victims' mentality where austerity politics and cuts to welfare are justified by accusing anyone not in work as lazy, for not trying hard enough to get a job, for refusing to work for free, or for being ill or disabled. At the same time the myth of generations of family members without work is promoted as part of an attack on the poor (Shildrick et al. 2012) and demonstrates the results of an unequal education system that fails working-class people. For instance, the competitive culture that has been created between schools
means that those who are anticipated not to succeed are discouraged from attempting to seek qualifications, or even shuffled off to other educational providers, so as not to lower the success rating of the institution. Such practices in the UK have had particularly damaging consequences for certain groups of young people.

Nevertheless, EU objectives and measures do shape these UK initiatives, but this has been mainly achieved through EU funding schemes like ESF projects and not by direct legislation. Both local and national policy makers often cite good practice examples from European countries.

Howieson (2003) confirmed low attainment in the UK not only increases the chances of early leaving, it also influences early leavers’ post-school prospects. Those with low attainment, about a third of the early leaver group, are the ones most likely to experience unemployment and to have unstable post-school careers. They also had a poorer chance of adding to their qualifications and those in employment had poorer prospects of training. Although young women were less likely to be early leavers, those who did leave school early had poorer outcomes than their male counterparts despite their higher average attainment.

A reduction in ESL in some parts of Britain, such as Scotland, has coincided with the widespread implementation of the “Skillseekers initiative”, where more than half of the early leavers increased their qualifications by the age of 19.

**Early School Leaving in other European countries**

Szalai and Kende (2014) examine ESL in Hungary. In 2013, the ESL rate was around 11 per cent. During the past ten years the trend in the EU has shown continuous improvement, while in Hungary it has been fluctuating: the period between 2004 and 2006 was marked by stagnation, and then from 2006 to 2010 by decrease, and since 2010 by increase, i.e. the situation has become worse in recent years. They suggest the labour market participation rate of those having completed only elementary school is extremely low; their employment rate is 20 per cent behind the EU average.

Ivan and Rostas (2013) examine the participation of Roma in Romanian education. They confirm the results are extremely unequal, both in terms of school abandonment and school performance. The risk of school dropout was much higher among Roma students compared to the non-Roma ones. The study revealed that in 2011 the risk of dropping out of school in the next two years was six times higher for a Roma child enrolled in lower secondary school. The causes lie in the social barriers triggered by belonging to an ethnic group and there was a certain influence from peers and community regarding the level of school absenteeism.

They also suggest there has been a very strong focus on the discrimination of Roma students in the Romanian school system confirming that school is not an equally friendly environment for all students, regardless of their ethnicity. They recommended a review of the National Strategy for tackling school dropout rate and increasing school attendance.

Sebastião and Álvares (2015) examine the Early School Leaving situation in Portugal. They describe how Portugal underwent changes in the education system in recent years, to address the relative low levels of schooling. Nevertheless, the level of early
School leaving is still very high in Portugal, due to historical, economic and social reasons. They confirm school leaving depends on three characteristics, the attitudes of families regarding its relevance, the contradictory position of the political, economic and cultural elites on the need to democratize school knowledge and the financing of education.

The reduction of ESL rates in Portugal is based on policies seeking to improve the living conditions of the Portuguese population and social changes on the family unit, which made increased demands on education. Now Portugal tends to follow European standards, so there has been greater investment in terms of preventive policy measures, mainly focused on the support to students with social and disadvantaged family backgrounds, as the TEIP Program (special support to schools in disadvantaged areas), the enlargement of the ASE (socio-economic support to disadvantaged students) and the PLNM (special support to students with different mother tongue).

In terms of preventive measures, two broad initiatives have been implemented with strong public investment and strategic change, the increase of compulsory education to 12 years in 2009 and the expansion of vocational education in public schools.

Magalhães et al. (2015) analyses the ESL-related policies, measures and instruments in Portugal. They show that the enactment of these policies is widely dependent on the actors at different policy making levels. The rationales and drivers orienting these policies – social inclusion, educational quality and effectiveness and qualifications for work and the labour market – set up at the European and national levels, were more or less successfully implemented at the local level depending on the how well embedded the instruments were in the specific contexts and whether they could be accessed and used by local actors. They found there was a consensus among the actors at different levels about the use of education as a tool for inserting young people into the labour market even if dissonances could be found in what concerns the practice and the potential exclusionary dimensions inherent in these processes.

Cyprus carried out a reform of education, leading towards a more intercultural orientation. Hajiosteriou and Angelides (2013) examine the politics of the development of this policy and comment on the gap between policy rhetoric and practice as there is an absence of concrete impact of this reform on the integration of immigrant families. They show the different obstacles impeding the effectiveness of the objectives of this education reform, such as the historical links with Greece leading to a lack of appropriation to the local context and policy objectives that are different from the outcomes.

Fernández-Macías et al. (2013) warn that Spain may be doomed to suffer the implications for economic and social development of having neglected the need to prepare its population for a knowledge society. The overall picture is that dropping out from compulsory education is mainly due to family background, where the mother’s educational level has the greatest impact on the probability of following post-compulsory education, with gender and the employment conditions in the local region. Male migrants are more likely to leave school early and the absence of one of the parents from the household clearly reduces the probabilities of finishing secondary education.
Early leaver profiles
The profiles of young people who do not continue in education and training vary. While some experience difficult personal situations that lead them to quitting education early, others are similar to those who eventually persist in education. The Cedefop study (2016b) identified six profiles of early leavers and learners at risk of early leaving. These profiles illustrate how different risk factors can interact and lead to early leaving (Figure 7).

The profiles show different levels of disengagement and different types of challenge. Professionals who design measures to tackle early leaving need to reflect on the specific characteristics of their target group/s and select actions accordingly. This approach also requires policy-makers to refine and target their responses.

![Figure 7: Early Leaver Profiles (Cedefop, 2016b)](image)

Successful Education Actions
The EU research project INCLUD-ED, Strategies for Inclusion and Social Cohesion in Europe from Education (European Commission, FP6, 2006–2011) identified a series of Successful Educational Actions (SEAs) that have improved educational outcomes for many children and young people in Europe (Flecha and Soler, 2013). The SEAs were
derived from a rigorous analysis of the educational systems, theories and practices, particularly, from the successful actions identified in 27 case studies across the European Union of schools serving families from low socio-economic status where children achieve excellent results (Valls and Padrós, 2011). Instead of segregating learners according to ability or by lowering down their educational opportunities, these actions were characterised by reorganising available school and community resources to support the academic achievements of all pupils.

Halba (2014) presents the European strategy in the struggle against Early School Leaving as implemented by the European Commission and specifically its impact on the French education system. The purpose of the research was to enhance an approach focused on skills and competences, with volunteering suggested as an alternative pedagogical strategy amongst pupils who face difficulties at school or who have already dropped out. He describes the specific ESL perspectives volunteering may tackle, for instance in enhancing social inclusion and by taking into account informal and non-formal learning.

A pedagogical approach to volunteering is presented through the Success at School project (http://www.successatschool.eu/) in six EU countries (UK, France, Bulgaria, Italy, Portugal and Slovenia). The project identified and developed both learning strategies and methods that help students at risk of ESL, develop ways to support and motivate students with migrant or Roma background to fulfil their educational potential, develop strategies to tackle gender stereotypes and support the development of inclusive teaching and learning approaches that cater for the needs of all students.

Kotnik (2004) describes how youngsters withdraw from the system of formal education, sometimes finding their way into parallel channels. They are in a state of risk, losing their traditional bonds to the formal education system. These young people, to be competitive on the labour market and sufficiently equipped for everyday life in the future, must develop inventiveness, autonomy, self-confidence, critical thinking and motivation for learning. She suggests that for those young people who don't fit in the traditional school arena, who are continually unsuccessful and are staying in this system only to gain »certificate«, is undoubtedly better to withdraw from this system – temporarily – to supportive environment of non-formal and informal education.

According to Cedefop (2016a), research has shown that work-based learning can have positive effects on motivation and professional identity, and ultimate retention, so there is expectation that work-based learning tracks should retain young people better than school-based ones. Analysis of data sets in France and the Netherlands – where qualifications can be achieved through school- and work-based forms of training – showed the reverse as in France, 77% of students in school-based tracks qualified compared to 73% of students from work-based tracks; and in the Netherlands, 84% of students from school-based tracks qualify compared to 77% of students from work-based tracks. This difference in retention rates can be explained by work-based learning tracks attracting a greater share of disadvantage students, older students, who are likely to be those who repeated a class, or those facing other difficulties. The difference in retention rates could also be a matter of student selection rather than the actual programmes.
Many early leavers completed lower secondary education but do not make the transition to upper secondary education and never start an upper secondary programme. With the exception of Romania, dual education systems appear to reduce drop out rates, countries with high work-based learning tend to have lower numbers of early leavers. Many early leavers completed a short, often vocational, programme. Work-based learning has motivational potential because being engaged in real working processes enables young people to construct a meaningful vision of their learning and future. Positive working relationships and valorisation of their work by other employees can be motivating and contribute to positive self-perception. The outcomes of the Cedefop (ibid) study are presented in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Data for better understanding of ESL (Cedefop, 2016b)

Not all countries have experienced the same positive outcomes with vocational pathways. The reform plan for Flemish secondary education was originally to restructure the early tracking of students and prevent ESL by providing more flexible
educational pathways. Clycq et al. (2015a) showed that specific political discussions took over the design and implementation process and became an obstacle to the implementation of EU and OECD education policy recommendations regarding structural reforms that can reduce the regional rates of early school leaving.

Using a communicative approach, the results from the INCLUD-ED Project (https://www.includ-ed.eu/) have documented Successful Education Actions (SEAs) showed a huge efficiency in terms of absenteeism. These have since been reproduced in several European Commission ESL recommendations and resolutions. Their research found that family involvement in schools improves children’s achievement and applying dialogue and participation in decision making and interaction groups.

Dialogue and participation in decision-making has been shown to be a very successful tool to increase engagement in education. Watkins (2007) suggests learning outcomes can be improved by establishing schools as “learning communities” that promote a sense of belonging among their members, supports cohesion through commitment, and embrace diversity. These could be online education offered as an alternative to regular schooling. Interactive groups can be developed in classrooms in order to accelerate children’s learning, increase academic achievement, and improve social relations.

Flecha (2014) explains the concept of developing schools as learning communities. The research describes how there were more than 130 schools, public and private, located in wealthy and low-income areas, with different levels of diversity, and in different countries, that have completed this transformation and are implementing learning communities and achieving excellent academic and emotional results for their pupils. Community involvement becomes important not only for the school but also for the transformation of that community.

Dialogic learning between Parents-Teachers-Pupils is one of the documented Successful Education Actions (SEAs) used with Roma families and students. (Flecha and Soler, 2013). The interactions between teachers, learners, family members and community members in the school led to educational success and social cohesion in schools (Figure 9). From a communicative methodology approach, scientific knowledge is constructed through dialogue between the social actors.

Learning communities seemed to inspire both teachers and pupils to seek improvements and take ownership of their learning processes. It also created favourable conditions for reducing school dropout and for helping pupils at risk. More specifically they assessed the ways in which schools working as learning communities impacted on teachers, children and families’ beliefs and the ways in which this connects to children’s diverse out-of-school knowledge and activities.
It seems that these communities have a sense of agency; they can act, promote a sense of belonging among their members, support cohesion through commitment, and embrace diversity. The research recommends the transformation of schools as ‘learning communities’ to reduce early school leaving and improve learning outcomes. In schools that function as a learning community, teachers, families, pupils, and community members work in close collaboration to implement successful, evidence-based actions in their schools.

Downes (2014) suggested a holistic focus is needed that includes family support, bridging health and education domains to meet complex needs of those at risk. Professional development is required to improve teachers’ conflict resolution skills, neutral mediating spaces are important for communicating with socio-economically marginalised families and commitment to emotional support for students at risk is essential. In ensuring the involvement of parents, their cooperation with the school is reinforced, creating school-parent partnerships can also increase learning motivation among pupils.

Learning communities may also be developed online. One of the earliest Internet-based virtual online community to address ESL was Notschool.net (http://www.notschool.net/). It offered an alternative to conventional classroom-based education for young people who, for a variety of reasons, can no longer cope with school or with complementary provisions such as home tutoring or specialist units. Participants entered information about themselves on their own page, and then communicated with fellow participants, mentors, or buddies via email, sound files, video and online community conversations (Figure 10). Mentors devised an individual plan for each participant, according to personal interests, needs and abilities; these set out learning gains which can be achieved within a short period of time. The participant then compile and present their work as documents or on their own pages, which are accessible only to themselves, their mentor, Team Leader and curriculum expert.
Many of the participants who entered the project showed little evidence of literacy, but demonstrated substantial gains through increased self-confidence in expression, spelling and keyboard skills. Personal mentoring empowered vulnerable young people to engage socially with others. Digital skills were enhanced as participants must come to grips with e-mail and word processing, and many went on to experiment with complex multimedia tools. The nnotschool.net learner centred approach provides the learner with the skills, tools and confidence to proactively participate in their learning, shifting them out of a model of dependency and non-achievement.

According to Weixler and Soudoplatoff (2015), the French initiative "masecondchance" presents the opportunities for continuing or resuming studies. The Web portal by Onisep, a body under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. It provides a service that delivers information and allows dialogue to meet the concerns, demands and needs of users based on their location. It consists of a website and a mobile application whose objective is to provide users with benchmarks and advice in order to rapidly establish contact with the host organizations closest to their homes (Figure 11).

Non-formal learning methods are frequently cited as successful solutions for working with students at risk from leaving education and training. For instance, Bezjak (2014)
explores the informal or alternative pedagogical approaches that proved to be efficient and effective in working with young dropouts, based on the findings of an international research project entitled Success at School, which between 2012 and 2014 in Slovenia. Caruso (2015) confirmed facilitating the recognition and validation of knowledge, skills and competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning and its permeability with formal education pathways was very important. An approach for the validation of non-formal learning scenarios for young students less than 16 year old located in a formal setting, i.e. in secondary schools, and at risk of becoming ESL was presented.

In this context, Hung et al. (2012) suggested storytelling is an effective instructional strategy for promoting learning motivation and improving the learning performance of students (Schank, 1990). It can enhance memory by allowing learners to recall learning and help develop interaction among students (Zull, 2002) and with others.

Flecha (2014) focuses on the need to invest in evidence-based policies and practices, as a means of improving educational outcomes and reducing costs. The recommendations for educational policy development included:

- Encourage inclusive successful actions that eliminate both streaming and mixture practices. Mixture is the traditional way of organizing heterogeneous classrooms and does not guarantee that each of the pupils’ needs receive attention. Streaming or ability grouping widens the achievement gap in academic performance and legitimizes the low attainment of some pupils. There are inclusion actions that have already demonstrated their success for children.

- Develop interactive groups in classrooms. Interactive groups accelerate children’s learning, increase academic achievement, and improve social relations.

- Encourage decisive, evaluative and educative types of family and community participation. Schools should develop mechanisms for the participation of family and community members

- Support the development of schools as learning communities. Schools as learning communities agree on a common vision and increase the commitment of pupils, parents, teachers and stakeholders to supporting school quality

- Facilitate Integrative Successful Actions. The implementation of Successful Educational Actions in schools leads to social transformations in the same communities in other areas of society, such as employment, health, housing and political participation.

A wide range of prevention, intervention and compensation measures are recommended by CEDEFOP (2016b). But they suggest there is no single blueprint of an effective intervention to tackle early leaving as the detail of successful interventions differs by target group and setting. Their study analysed 44 successful measures to tackle early leaving through VET and derived from these lessons for policy design, implementation and evaluation.

The OECD (2012a) recommended five responses that can contribute to prevent failure and promote completion of upper secondary education

1. Eliminate grade repetition
2. Avoid early tracking and defer student selection to upper secondary
3. Manage school choice to avoid segregation and increased inequities
4. Make funding strategies responsive to students’ and schools’ needs
5. Design equivalent upper secondary education pathways to ensure completion

They also suggested five policy recommendations that have been effective in supporting the improvement of low performing disadvantaged schools:

i. Strengthen and support school leadership
ii. Stimulate a supportive school climate and environment for learning
iii. Attract, support and retain high quality teachers
iv. Ensure effective classroom learning strategies
v. Prioritize linking schools with parents and communities

Kuran (2013) comments that key competences (DeSeCo, 2005) are becoming a very important issue in European education and particularly the European reference framework that the member states are expected to adapt according to cultural and educational specificities of their countries. The key competences for early leaving were assessed by examining the social integration program created under the “Project Learning for Young Adults” initiative. (http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1070&langId=en&newsId=1963&furtherNews=yes).

In dealing with prevention, intervention and compensation for early leaving Cedefop (2016b) identify a series of key features:

i) for successful prevention measures:
- engage in a discussion with the young person to show interest in him/her and also to understand his/her challenges;
- review the planning of education and training to ensure that young people can constantly make the link and the transfer between theory and practice, improving the perceived relevance of the more theoretical parts of training;
- provide young-person-driven counselling, mentoring or coaching to help him/her develop a positive vision of his/her future which includes learning;
- raise awareness among teachers about the importance of combating early leaving and their role in this context;
- develop school-level commitment to prevention activities;
- involve parents in discussions about their children’s orientation. Make them better informed about the educational choices available and raise awareness of the importance of their commitment to their child’s education pathway

ii) for successful intervention measures
- organisation of early remedial support to avoid them accumulating wide competence gaps compared to the curriculum
- possibilities for young people to try several professions to have a more concrete idea of the fit between personal profile and the work
- clarify aspirations and develop a positive learning project for oneself
- acquire the basic routines needed to integrate into a programme and succeed, including work-readiness to enrol in apprenticeships
- provide psycho-pedagogical support to help develop effective strategies to deal with learning difficulties and adjust the training programme and
- motivation and engagement measures to develop positive attitude to education and training; work-based learning and other forms of practice based training can be included
- identify health and well-being challenges and support the young person in overcoming these, including, if needed, by adjusting the education programme

iii) for successful compensation measures

- training that gives access to a qualification but which is sufficiently flexible to enable the target group to attend to existing obligations or which provides an alternative source of revenue
- tailor-made training to improve basic skills
- motivational activities to help build confidence and self-efficacy;
- support with non-education challenges such as health, housing, social benefits
- developing social competences to enable young people integrate into a group of students or a group of employees;
- acquiring basic habits which are needed for (re-)integration into education and training and/or employment, such as punctuality, planning, learning-to learn.

**Stories and Storytelling in education**

Storytelling is the art of telling stories. Stories can make difficult and abstract subjects easier to understand. Storytelling is a tool for preserving memory, writing history, learning, entertaining, organizing and also healing (Raimist, 2010). It is in the telling of stories that communities build identities, construct meaning, and make connections with others and the world. Stories help capitalise on the power of narrative, help bring logic, and facilitate access to information. Storytelling is a social transaction that engages people in a communicative relationship. Through the act of listening to and sharing each other’s stories a sense of belonging and community building can take place.

There are many different ways of telling stories, such as oral, written and digital storytelling. Bordeau (2008) suggests there has been a revival in the use of stories since the 1990’s with both positive and negative effects. On the one hand people can understand and make sense of the world around them, on the other it is possible to use stories for manipulation.

Stories are generally written in the first person. Many of the storytelling processes follow the cognitive processes in Mezirow’s ten transformational learning steps (Merriam, 2004) (Annex 2). The storytelling process involves exploring and collecting data, making a story by constructing the storyline or plot by ordering, establishing logical connections, developing flow, formulating a message, and materializing the plot. Then a presentation needs to be built and the results shared before finally receiving and handling feedback from the audience. The external factors involved include taking the target audience into account, the setting or way the story is presented and the medium the story material will be created in for instance video, images, text, narration.
Storytelling is described as a strong tool for community-building by Swerts (2015). It is one of the most ancient forms of education used by every culture to pass knowledge between individuals and generations. It is a powerful political tool for marginalized populations who seek to promote narrative in the social construction of life stories. These are normally collaborative productions that involve emotional transactions between the storyteller and the audience (Ewick and Silbey 2003).

Storytelling can be used as a didactical approach in education. Its main strengths are in their appeal, variety and accessibility. Stories are also engaging and easy to remember. Storytelling helps share experiences, explain events and phenomena and transfer knowledge. Different types of storytelling are described in Annex 2.

De Caril (2013) reports on the results of the pilot EU Dedalus project (http://www.cittastudi.org/dedalus) that used a storytelling method to reduce dropout rates from school. After one year, only 3% of 324 students at risk left, while the national average was 18%. These results suggested narrative and dialogue are good ways for engaging youngsters, helping them to reflect, organise and memorize information.

The idea was to use storytelling to deal with choices and career transitions in a different way. Rather than use standard tests, the pupils tell their own stories about the challenges they face, their friends and the obstacles they try to overcome. The project created a toolbox to be used with school guidance counsellors to identify possible routes. Through the act of listening to and sharing one another’s stories, storytelling involves community building through the collectivisation of personal experiences and personalisation of collective experiences. A sense of belonging is enhanced as emotions play a key role in linking the “story of me” with the “story of us”. However, according to Bordeau (2008), the relationship between stories and emotions is not the same in different countries and cultures.

Researchers like Hung et al. (2012) have shown that storytelling has been widely applied to learning, and has favourable effects on knowledge construction and motivation. Stacey and Hardy (2011) confirm digital storytelling is an effective approach for helping students collect information, create new ideas, and organize their knowledge, which can improve their comprehension of the learning content.

Narrative and dialogue are good ways for engaging people and helping them organize and memorize information. However, with the development of communication media, a rapidly increasing rate of new information being produced and the ease of duplication and transmission of data across the Internet generates considerable information overload. The curation of digital content responds to this issue. Content curation is a term linked to creating a better online experience and a more organized and accurate management of the online content. Si (2016) explains how narrative, storytelling and content curation techniques are used for better engaging an audience and helping the audience digest and remember content. He presents a narrative-based presentation tool for helping people explore large amounts of information by proactively constructing narratives. It takes information as a network of topics from a variety of sources, and performs narrative planning as it is interacting with the user. Si suggests this system could aid people in information exploration by providing the information in the form of an interactive visualization presenting topics in a
meaningful and interesting sequence while illustrating the relationships among the topics introduced.

Story-based learning (SBL) creates space for story telling (MacKinnon and Young, 2014). Rather than just writing the stories can be recorded or guests can be invited to class to share their personal experiences. In addition, short video-clips or stories posted on the Internet and/or stories in books can be used with the SBL model. They describe a six-phase process used with trainee nurses (Figure 12), incorporating elements of narrative pedagogy, case method teaching and problem based learning.

Capuano et al. (2014) introduce a learning model based on storytelling that helps to build challenging and highly engaging training resources in the context of legal education for citizens with little or no background on the topics or concepts. They suggest this establishes the use of a storytelling paradigm in line with a tradition of narrative pedagogy.

Figure 12: Story-based learning – blending content and process to learn nursing (MacKinnon and Young, 2014)

Lugmayr et al. (2015) introduce the term serious storytelling as a new genre of media, defined as storytelling without an entertainment purpose. It is considered to be “thoughtful”, “impressive in quality”, and “relating to matters of importance”. Serious storytelling concerns the context: situation, space, place where the narrative is taking place, the course: the plot and events, the content expressed through various language and media elements and the channel or types of media (Annex 3).
Digital Storytelling

New digital technologies have modified the modes and provide many new possibilities of building narratives and telling stories. On the Internet users are also the co-creators of information they can read and criticize, post and share. This opens different more fragmented forms of storytelling that are open to collaboration (Lits, 2012).

Digital storytelling is defined as an integrated application of multiple media and software that utilizes the art of storytelling and techniques of digital tools with new methods, contributing to helping learners become involved in the learning situation (Lowenthal and Dunlap, 2010). It is a branch of storytelling that uses digital media to tell a story (Heo, 2009). The stories are expressed through art, oral history, creative writing, speaking, photographs, music, news clippings, digital video, the Web, graphic design, sound engineering, or animation. The technique utilizes multimedia technology to foster higher order cognition and help students with various learning styles.

Meadows (2003) considers digital stories as short, individual multimedia pieces beneficial for connecting with previous experiences (Malita and Martin, 2010). The use of multimedia in digital storytelling encourages participants to communicate meaning on multiple levels, for example sound, point, emotional content, tension and story arc. It allows them to take fresh perspective on their story. Robin (2008) identifies seven elements of digital storytelling (Annex 4).

Digital storytelling has been treated as an effective approach to promoting cooperation and knowledge construction in classrooms. Lowenthal and Dunlap (2010) developed a Community of Inquiry framework based on the digital storytelling approach to provide a way for teachers and students to communicate and share knowledge on the Internet. Gyabak and Godina (2011) employed digital storytelling as an instructional intervention for bridging the digital divide between rural and urban elementary school students to help those who have never had the chance to experience computer technology.

Hung et al. (2012) proposed a project-based digital storytelling approach applied to a science learning activity. The aim was to compare the performance of the approach with that of conventional project-based learning. The authors explored the effects of integrating digital storytelling and project-based learning on problem-solving competences and students’ learning achievements. The experimental results showed that the project-based learning with digital storytelling engaged learners and effectively enhance the students’ science learning motivation, problem-solving competences and learning (Stacey and Hardy, 2011). Through digital storytelling, students learn to tell a story, and in doing so, become more effective in collaborative working environments.

Barrett (2006) states that digital storytelling can support four types of learning strategies: i) student participation, ii) reflecting iii) deep learning and iv) project-based learning. The important issue is to ensure the effective integration of technology in teaching and learning process. She presents digital storytelling as a deep learning tool, where students learn by designing and constructing actual solutions to real life problems (Figure 13).
Freidus and Hlubinka (2002) propose the development of digital stories as important not just in its product but also in its process, in this case of reflective practice. They suggest digital storytelling for reflective practice can be a valuable, transformative tool for personal, professional, organisational, and community development. As stories are shared, the sense of community is strengthened. The stories mediate relationships in different circumstances and across different generations. Through reflective practice, individuals and groups give their work conscious attention, thereby examining and improving their positions as learners in their communities (Schön, 1983).

![Diagram of digital storytelling components](image)

**Figure 13: Components of digital storytelling (Freidus and Hlubinka, 2002)**

Raimist (2010) showed how a class on digital storytelling can be used to help students expand understandings of themselves and their roles in communities inside as well as outside the organization. For some students, digital storytelling was a process of synthesis, in which they made sense of their own stories through a deliberate sorting of multimodal content (Lambert, 2006). For others the process was one of self-definition whereby elements of narrative and visual expression encourage identity revision (Lundby, 2008). In both cases the process of storytelling was said to be one of “vernacular creativity” (Burgess, 2006) in which the students transformed their own everyday stories into a “shared public culture”, a space for sorting through conflicting media messages while also forging new possibilities for seeing themselves and others.

Bran (2010) suggested that digital storytelling with a combination of images, sound, and texts could attract student interest and enhance their learning achievements. Through digital storytelling, individuals learn to tell a story, and in doing so, become more effective actors in collaborative environments. Digital storytelling encourages participants to communicate meaning on multiple levels. It offers a creative challenge to reflective practice and as such is a valuable, transformative tool for personal, professional, organisational and community development.

Skarpas et al. (2016) studied whether and how digital storytelling can contribute to occupational therapy students’ learning through reflections on experiences from their
placements. They found the students learned through the reflection of their experiences in the digital storytelling process. They highlighted the importance of creativity when sharing thoughts and reflections with peers. The stories provided powerful ways to aid reflection and give attention to feelings, thoughts, and emotions (McCorquodale & Kinsella, 2015). Such reflection is based on learner constructivism, where learning is an active process of constructing knowledge and meaning from personal experience (Heo, 2009). Through more experiences, individuals become able to construct deeper understanding and interpretation. They become able to make sense of their experiences and are able to transfer their knowledge to other areas, where relevant.

**Storytelling through maps**

Kerski (2015) suggests ‘storytelling’ is one of five converging global trends that increase the importance of geography and the use of maps for telling a story. Geographic tools, data, and multimedia on the web offer the ability and audience for storytelling through maps. Digital maps are a gateway to discovery about the world and local communities in which young people live. He stresses maps are useful to broad sectors of society as essential tools for understanding issues and for solving real problems, they can be a gateway to discovery about the physical and cultural world and local communities in which we live. Maps are tools to transmit spatially-related information, like oral or written stories they stimulate the imagination, while also providing orientation to known geography (Fox, 2016).

Today, Geo-ICT tools, open data, multimedia on the web and Web 2.0 expand the ability and audience for storytelling through maps. There are many different existing platforms that enable citizens to tell stories through maps, these include Esri Story Maps (http://storymaps.arcgis.com), Map Story (http://mapstory.org), and other tools. Eikenes (2015) links Storymaps to the research process as it helps to organize thoughts, evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of a situation, give a clear visual reference for exploring potential new directions and an instrument for understanding and addressing complex issues.

Strachan (2014) confirms that Story Maps are perceived by teachers to be user-friendly, interactive, and engaging. However several obstacles stand in the way of successful implementation, including inadequate technology resources at schools, a need for additional training, and a lack of curriculum time. Eikenes (2015) links Storymaps to the research process, as a visual model that helps to organise thoughts and to tell a clear, compelling story. A Storymap can help to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the project, provide a clear visual reference for exploring potential new directions and lets you identify any missing pieces of that need attention and for narrating the story in a clear and effective way. The Storymap highlights the questions and answers that anchor the presentation. In this way, the map becomes a tool that communicates, and moreover, encourages communication about aspects generally omitted because they are personal, even intimate (Martouzet et al., 2010).

Strachan (2014) researches teachers’ perceptions of Esri Storymaps as effective teaching tools. As a relatively new web application they combine digitized, dynamic maps with other story elements i.e., title, text, legend, popups, and other multimedia
visuals to help the storyteller effectively convey a message. Analysis revealed that Storymaps were perceived to be user-friendly, interactive, and engaging. Teachers felt their students would enjoy using the technology. Several obstacles to successful implementation were highlighted, including inadequate technology resources in schools, a need for additional training, and a lack of time. Nevertheless, the teachers agreed that their students possessed the aptitude and skills to be able to successfully develop Storymaps.

Storytelling with maps and multimedia encourages visualization as a storytelling medium to tell compelling data stories. Lee et al., (2015) confirm visualization research on storytelling has mainly centered on how data visualization components contribute to communication and the delivery or presentation of information. It should always contains components that form the story, like structures, elements, and concepts, and those that influence the “telling” part of storytelling such as people, tools, and channels. Thus visualization has both design elements that form a story and presentation methods that have been used to “tell” it.

Visual data stories include a set of story pieces or specific facts backed up by data and information. Most of the story pieces are visualized to support one or more intended messages. The visualization includes annotations as labels, pointers, text, or narration to clearly highlight and emphasize the message, and to avoid ambiguity. Story pieces can then be presented in a meaningful order or connections made between them to support high-level communication goals of the creator. This could range from educating or entertaining the viewer with an illustration of facts to convincing or persuading them with thought-provoking opinions.

Boy et al. (2015) present the results of web-based field experiments, in which they evaluate the impact of using narrative visualization techniques and storytelling on user-engagement with exploratory information visualizations. The Information visualization (Infovis) can be interactive and exploratory as users explore the potential of narrative visualization techniques and storytelling to trigger user-engagement.

Chavez et al. (2015) found that the use of Storymaps increased reading comprehension, on-task behaviour and positive attitudes towards reading. The display and arrangement of the story elements on a Storymap assists the students to visualize the story structure and to identify the key story components within a story passage (Boon et al, 2015).

**Digital storytelling pedagogies**

Narratives and stories constitute an alternative approach to knowledge and learning. The narrative provides a cognitive organizational scheme through which the narrator can subjectively organise, shape, and structure experiences into a coherent whole. Bezjak (2014) reviews the Storymapping pedagogical approaches that young people have an affinity with. Four main characteristics of the approach are identified, interactive content, more dynamism in the ways of teaching, less traditional pedagogical approaches and challenges that provoke greater creativity and empowerment to participates in decisions on many aspects of their lives. Narratives and stories are powerful aids to understanding and reflection as they can give attention to feelings, thoughts, and emotions.
The pedagogy of Storymapping offers a sociocultural perspective on learning, implying that knowledge is constructed in a social and cultural environment. It relates closely with social pedagogy that considers the person as a whole, without separating knowledge, feelings, and actions (Úcar, 2013). It is characterised as a hybrid, complex interdisciplinary, inter-professional, open, dynamic, changing, alive and extraordinarily versatile subject. Each of these dimensions of the person are activated and developed by their relationships with others. So relationships that occur in people’s everyday lives are, at the same time, vehicles, contexts, and contents of socio-pedagogical actions.

Heo’s (2009) research is based on learner constructivism, where learning is considered to be an active process of constructing knowledge and meaning from personal experience. Through more experiences, individuals become able to construct deeper understanding and interpretation. They become able to make sense of their learning and they will be able to transfer their knowledge to other areas, where relevant.

Calvard (2016) concentrates on ‘sensemaking’ as a key process for effective organizing and creating meaning through cycles of interpretation and action. The result is a more ordered environment from which further action and reflection can be drawn (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014). Sensemaking is thus retrospective but also ongoing, it is social and linked to identity and enactment (Weick et al., 2005). Sensemaking has thus been identified as a useful process during crises, periods of change, learning and cognition (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2014).

Capuano et al. (2014) suggests narrative pedagogies have increased in importance. It has been effectively utilised in several disciplinary contexts and domains, it guarantees a high degree of learner involvement and of skills development (Blissenden, 2007). Holland (2017 suggests Design Thinking can be used to generate empathy with youngsters. It is a constructive approach that would help to engage in conversations. The approach helps to move away from assumptions and generalisations and starts on the path to ask the right questions that can address the challenges faced by ESL. The approach deepens empathy towards one another and fosters more innovative mindsets.

Reinertsen (2014) considers the importance of teachers developing self-assessing recursive pedagogies and case / action research practices in schools. Teachers simultaneously producing and self-evaluate their own practices, developing self-reflexive and recursive practices in search of better quality.

Raimist (2010) describes the use of a ‘Story Circle’ as an important part of the digital composing process. This is an in-class workshop where students share their story ideas and get feedback from others in the class (Annex 5). After the Story Circle students can go through the process of building their digital stories with extensive feedback from the teachers and from each other. The students could then post their digital stories to a public space or blog, and offer comments on other students’ digital stories. Comments can also come from other people like families and friends.

Timmerman et al. (2014) proposes there is a positive correlation between educational success and an individual’s health status or psychological well-being. Dean and Goldspink (2014) confirm the relationship between the educator and the learner is inevitably and necessarily deeply relational - dealing with each learner’s sense of
themselves. Ignoring the quality of relationships, or the emotional and experiential resources the learner brings is perhaps one of the shortcomings of pedagogy framed in the context of modernity where the focus is on the transmission of knowledge, with the purpose of achieving a narrow set of measurable outcomes.

Heo (2009) confirms that students today are not hesitant in using digital devices for communication, socializing, entertainment and information sharing via Web 2.0 / Cloud technologies. However they do not exhibit such high self-efficacy in using technology in a formal environment like in education, or in expressing their opinions. They are thus less confident about their own capabilities and performance capabilities in and as a result, their level of motivation and engagement will be reduced.

Heo’s study (ibid) examined the effects of the digital storytelling experience on pre-service teachers’ self-efficacy and engagement towards educational technology. The results indicated that participants’ technology competency and openness to change towards educational technology improved with the experience of digital storytelling. Transferring technology knowledge and skills that they already possess into the learning environment by digital storytelling is important as it promotes authentic learning experiences, which allow students to take more ownership over what they learn and to integrate multiple content areas and multiple skills holistically (Maina, 2004). The authors suggest that digital storytelling is a potent technology that can help improve technology competencies and dispositions towards educational technology.

Design thinking may offer key cognitive and behavioural components necessary to reduce early leaving and engage those at risk. Schweitzer et al (2016) discuss the design thinking mindset, which is an integral capability for innovation and adaptation. Designers have a set of skills that can be applied to a wider range of challenges and used to solve complex social problems (Brown and Katz, 2011). The Design Thinking process is exploratory (Brown, 2009) that usually begins with an initial defining of the problem, followed by exploration of the user and design space, generating possibilities through brainstorming, building prototypes that are then tested, often a number of times, and the findings used to refine the problem resolution. Human-centeredness is at the heart of Design Thinking.

Wooff (2016) aligns design thinking with essential 21st century skills. Pedagogically design thinking is prevalent in classrooms through reflective practice and to focus on the competencies needed to engage with 21st Century learning experiences. Holland (2017) considers the use of design thinking to facilitate discussions with millennial. Using design thinking educators can start to build more effective environments as it starts with empathy and is a highly constructive approach that helps to engage in conversations by asking the right questions to address the challenges being faced.

Vandecandelaere et al. (2016) propose a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) model. UDL states that education should be tailored as closely as possible to the different needs of each student.

Deakin Crick and Goldspink (2014) underline the importance of deep engagement with the students at risk and that learning is most engaging when it is placed, purposeful, pervasive, and principled.
• Placed learning reaches and has relevance to students in the space that they inhabit, connecting with the student’s family/community and interests outside school.
• Purposeful learning absorbs the student in actions of practical or intellectual value, fosters a sense of value and agency – students have the chance to work like professionals;
• Pervasive learning: extends beyond school examinations, is supported by family, carers, and peers, and can be prolonged through independent and interdependent informal learning;
• Principled: appeals to the student’s passions or moral purpose – it matters to the learner.

They conclude:
“the relationship between the educator and the learner is inevitably and necessarily deeply relational - dealing with each learner’s sense of themselves. Ignoring the quality of relationships, or the emotional and experiential resources the learner brings is perhaps one of the shortcomings of pedagogy framed in the context of modernity where the focus is on the transmission of knowledge, with the purpose of achieving a narrow set of measurable outcomes.”

Online Tools
A list of online tools recommended in the literature was produced. These are listed in Annex 6.

Other Sources
A series of ESL Web sites was examined. These are listed in Annex 7. Other sources are listed in Annex 8.

Recommendations
In order to combat Early School Leaving, the recommendations from this extensive review of literature are to:
• Use storytelling to understand obstacles to completion and the needs of the young people
• Use storytelling to develop a transformative learning environment for individuals
• Use storytelling to enable a learning community to develop
• Use storytelling to better understand ESL
• Ensure a creative storytelling process is used
• Describe and use innovative, interactive storytelling pedagogies
• Ensure the technologies are integrated, rather than the focus of the actions, to make them invisible, both in terms of telling the story and sharing the story
• Provide opportunities from a technical perspective – not prescriptive – high flexibility
• Show storytelling matters and that it has meaning to the young people
• Make sure that students are treated as professionals, which is linked to non-formal approaches so they have ownership

Conclusions
Policymakers and education stakeholders recognise the role of ICT as a key enabler of innovation and change in Education and Training and for learning in general. This implies that Storytelling with Maps ought to be trailed for use with young people at risk of early leaving. However if it is to be successfully implement, innovation in education needs to be encouraged.

Innovation can be described as an intentional activity where new ideas are implemented to address specific problems. It is about change as innovation is a dynamic and unpredictable process involving complex interactions. In education it normally requires de-centralisation of decision making (Ellison, 2009) allowing new ideas and practices to emerge.

Bezjak (2014) comments on the four characteristics of pedagogical approaches in connection with the use of ICT that youngsters have an affinity with:

i) they want more interactive content, more dynamism in the ways of teaching and as less traditional approaches

ii) they want to be stimulated by different visual and audio stimuli and related to interactive and participatory teaching approaches that encourage inclusion and engagement

iii) they need approaches that challenge them, for example through didactic games, where young people can stay active for longer and they can see a direct benefit from the approaches and content

iv) they want approaches that can empower them individually to monitor and manage their lives.

The most successful pedagogical approaches for the reintegration of early school leavers in education are therefore flexible, inclusive and participatory, tailored to the needs of young people, aimed at the development of their careers, and include a variety of possible approaches, such as mentoring or individual learning plan.

Bocconi et al. (2013) propose that ESL initiatives should focus on the non-formal and informal learning rather than the relevance of the use of technology. Indeed, over recent years, Early School Leaving (ESL) has been transformed in policy terms into Early Leaving from Education and Training (ELET) incorporating vocational education and non-formal approaches outside the classroom. This is now understood at EU level as a failure to complete upper secondary education or a failure to gain qualifications or school leaving certificates.
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46


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Annexes

Annex 1: Mezirow’s ten steps to transformational learning
(from [https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/fire-crackers-learning-hans-van-den-berg](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/fire-crackers-learning-hans-van-den-berg))

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<th>Clusters (Kathleen King)</th>
<th>Jack Mezirow’s ten steps</th>
<th>Some pointers</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fear and uncertainty</td>
<td>1. Adisorienting dilemma</td>
<td>Kaoru Miki suggests to use a less confrontational dilemma as the starting point: an edge emotion.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Self-examination</td>
<td>She also proposes to up-front explain the theory to learners.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Testing and Exploring</td>
<td>3. A critical assessment of epistemic, socio-cultural or psychic assumptions</td>
<td>And she points out that learners need guidance while doing self-reflection, to prevent falling back into their comfort zone.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions</td>
<td>Kathleen King (2009) has developed the Learning Activities Survey for Transformative Learning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Affirming and connecting</td>
<td>6. Planning of a course of action</td>
<td>Papers on application of TLT are not abundant – but there are some.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>7. Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plan</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8. Provisional trying of new roles</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Building of competence and self-competence in new roles and relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>New perspectives</td>
<td>10. Reintegration of a new perspective into one’s life</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Adults learn differently than children and adolescents
A learner can change perspective by her/himself, with a coach, in a course…
Creating a safe atmosphere, trust and anxiety reduction is vital
Self-examination in the light of a new perspective may have a learner fall back to the comfort zone
Transformative Learning Theory is in need of transformation
Annex 2: Different types of storytelling (after Bordeau, 2008)

Different types of storytelling:

- **Storytelling management** The storytelling originated in the USA around the turn of the twentieth century, as a strategy of Management and Marketing. It was also widely used in the field of policy, for example during his presidential campaign Barack Obama made extensive use of storytelling techniques.

- **Digital storytelling** that employs digital technologies to create hypermedia narratives

- **Monomyth**, also called the hero’s journey, a story structure that is found in many folk tales, myths and religious writings from around the world

- **The mountain structure**, a way of mapping the tension and drama in a story. It’s similar to the monomyth because it helps us to plot when certain events occur in a story

- **Nested loops** a storytelling technique where you layer three or more narratives within each other

- **Sparklines** a way of mapping presentation structures. Graphic designer Nancy Duarte uses sparklines to analyse famous speeches graphically in her book Resonate

- **In medias res storytelling** when you begin your narrative in the heat of the action, before starting over at the beginning to explain how you got there.

- **Converging ideas** a speech structure that shows the audience how different strands of thinking came together to form one product or idea

- **A ‘false start’ story** is when you begin to tell a seemingly predictable story, before unexpectedly disrupting it and beginning it over again

- **The petal structure**, a way of organising multiple speakers or stories around one central concept.

- **The Storymapping** is a form of storytelling that uses geographic maps or images to include in them a series of links to web resources related to a specific topic in order to get a navigable route. Mass media and journals make extensive use of this form of storytelling for their investigation and dossier.

- **Visual Storytelling**, stories told by images. The possibilities of how an image can be used are varied:
  a) images in a series of presentation or slideshow with links, texts, the recorded voice of a narrator;
  b) accompanied by links to multimedia resources and/or the recorded voice of a narrator;
  c) interactive image by clicking on it, you open resources on the web.

- **Video storytelling** by using Web Browser Based Services or in which the story takes place through the ability to manipulate the video by inserting text, links, annotations, images, questions, etc.
Annex 3: The components of a serious story
(after Lugmayr, Suhonen and Sutinen, 2015)

**Context:** situation, space, place, application context, and particular context related modalities are where the narrative is taking place (e.g. TV, advertising, sports, household, festivals, learning, urban environments, learning etc.);

**Course:** sum of plot (explicit, and non-diegetic events), in addition audience interpreted and inferred events of D. Bordwell’s model of narrative – how content is evolving in a cause-effect relationship as part of the application context, and content; as well as how the audience interacts with content.

**Content:** the actual content of the narrative, thus the human perceptive components of the plot of the narration expressed through various elements from media genres, as e.g. film language, natural language, literature, or ubiquitous media objects;

**Channel:** in difference to other type of media (however, not all types of media), media channels gain importance, as serious storytelling can happen across various distribution channels, or channels where media objects can be perceived.

Serious storytelling is also about the three components of narration, interaction, and content and their relation to each other in time and space.
Annex 4: Elements of digital storytelling
(after Robin, 2008)

1. Point of view: What is the thread of the story and what the perspective of the author?
2. Dramatic question (complication): Key question that keeps the viewer’s attention, which will be answered by the end of the story.
3. Emotional content: The story deals with important issues that come to life in a personal and meaningful way and connects the story with the audience.
4. The power of the voice that narrates: Adaptation of the story in a way that viewers understand the content.
5. Power of sound: Music or other sounds that support the story and give the story an emotional component.
6. Efficiency: Using just the right amount of components to tell the story (less is more)
7. The rhythm of the story: How quickly things happen?
Annex 5: Story Circle Ground Rules
(after Raimist, 2010)

The ground rules of the Story Circle are:

(1) let each person present to the end without interruption;
(2) give an affirming comment as the first response to a participant;
(3) frame critical feedback with the construction, “If it were my story, I would...”; and
(4) assertive participants should try to let the more shy ones speak first.

We added a fifth ground rule when we used the Story Circle technique in our “Digital Storytelling in and with Communities of Color” class:

(5) while some stories may appear to be more “serious” than others, they all reflect the speakers’ truths, so don’t judge them against one another.

In adding this fifth rule, they intended to create a space for students to begin resolving the various tensions involved in the conflicted cultural and identity-based work of digital storytelling.
### Annex 6: Online tools and Web sites

Several online tools can be used to tell stories through three main steps—import data, select the visualization type, and configure the visual attributes (e.g., color palettes).

For interactions and animations: D3 ([www.d3.org](http://www.d3.org)), Ellipsis, Story Points - Most of the existing tools are meant to help people create material that can be shared on the web asynchronously.

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<tr>
<td>Center for Digital Storytelling (<a href="http://www.storycenter.org">www.storycenter.org</a>), whose purpose is to support individuals in creating and sharing personal stories about their lives. An example of a digital story: <a href="http://www.patientvoices.org.uk/flv/0566pv384.htm">http://www.patientvoices.org.uk/flv/0566pv384.htm</a> software used: Moviemaker, iMovie</td>
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<td>Esri Story Maps (<a href="http://storymaps.arcgis.com">http://storymaps.arcgis.com</a>)</td>
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<td>Map Story (<a href="http://mapstory.org">http://mapstory.org</a>) Example Storymap about Rhode Island <a href="http://arcg.is/1TdHSjZ">http://arcg.is/1TdHSjZ</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Online Media References</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Digital Storytelling in and with Communities of Color” blog: <a href="http://blog.lib.umn.edu/afroam/storytelling/">http://blog.lib.umn.edu/afroam/storytelling/</a></td>
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<td><a href="http://www.psych.rochester.edu/SDT/">http://www.psych.rochester.edu/SDT/</a></td>
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<td><a href="http://schlechtycenter.org">http://schlechtycenter.org</a></td>
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<td><a href="http://rubistar.4teachers.org">http://rubistar.4teachers.org</a></td>
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<td><a href="http://www.storycenter.org">http://www.storycenter.org</a></td>
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<td>Caruso 2015, <a href="http://www.non4lesl.eu">http://www.non4lesl.eu</a></td>
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<td><a href="http://LearningEmergence.net">http://LearningEmergence.net</a></td>
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Sigarchian et al. 2015

An e-book has a static and a dynamic component:

- static component: it’s a digital object with textual and/or other types of content.
- dynamic component: it can have technology-dependent features that make it more interactive and dynamic than its paper counterpart.

EPUB3 is a powerful format for eBooks, based on HTML5, Javascript and CSS.

In the case of digital storytelling, enhanced e-books can connect story entities and emotions to real-world elements. In this paper is presented the novel concept of a Hybrid Book, a generic Interactive Digital Narrative (IDN) artefact that requires seamless collaboration between content and smart devices.

A Hybrid Book makes it possible to provide human sensible feedback while flipping pages, enabling a more enjoyable reading experience.

Five aspects are important:

- narrative analysis
- interoperability between different implementations: the use of technical standards e.g. for data exchange
- sustainability of digital artefacts
- author-centered view
- user-focuses perspective


Šerbec 2014

Software for digital storytelling: Live Movie Maker, Domo Animate, ZooBurst, StoryJumper, ToonDoo, StoryBird, Little Bird Tales, Bookbuilder.

For the assembly of story: iMovie, Windows Live Movie Maker, Final Cut Express can be used.

Visual software tools for creating interactive stories: Scratch, Kodu, StoryTellingAlice, Alice.

[http://it.masternewmedia.org/content-curation-come-perche-utilizzarla/](http://it.masternewmedia.org/content-curation-come-perche-utilizzarla/)
[https://storytellingpolitico.wordpress.com/](https://storytellingpolitico.wordpress.com/)
Howland et al. 2016

This paper describes Narrative Threads; a suite of tools to support multimodal interactive storytelling (writing a computer game).

Participants are 11 – 15 years old, it gives a detailed description of the tools used for developing the game and offers a visual presentation of the game.

This is a very technical description of the development process of the system

Narrative Threads is a suite of tools designed to encourage young game designers to approach the game creation activity as a storytelling exercise, and by doing so to improve their multimodal, interactive writing skills.


http://users.sussex.ac.uk/~bend/papers/toe12.pdf
# Annex 7: Web Sites Reviewed

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Centre for Digital Storytelling (CDS)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.storycenter.org/">http://www.storycenter.org/</a></td>
<td>Training, health through storytelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Storytelling</td>
<td><a href="http://courseweb.ischool.illinois.edu/~jevogel2/lis506/howto.html">http://courseweb.ischool.illinois.edu/~jevogel2/lis506/howto.html</a></td>
<td>how to create/ evaluate a digital story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INCLUD-ED</td>
<td><a href="http://creaub.info/included/">http://creaub.info/included/</a></td>
<td>Strategies for inclusion and social cohesion in Europe from Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NON-FOR-LESL</td>
<td><a href="https://www.non4lesl.eu">https://www.non4lesl.eu</a></td>
<td>non-formal learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story map JS</td>
<td><a href="https://storymap.knightlab.com">https://storymap.knightlab.com</a></td>
<td>telling stories with maps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story maps</td>
<td><a href="https://storymaps.arcgis.com/en/">https://storymaps.arcgis.com/en/</a></td>
<td>how to make your own story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T-Story</td>
<td><a href="http://www.tstory.eu/project">http://www.tstory.eu/project</a></td>
<td>promotes use of storytelling in education and training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talent Match London</td>
<td><a href="http://www.talentmatchlondon.org">http://www.talentmatchlondon.org</a></td>
<td>Part of UK-wide alternative approach to tackling youth exclusion - focus on employment outcomes</td>
</tr>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tales</td>
<td><a href="http://www.storiesforlearning.eu/">http://www.storiesforlearning.eu/</a></td>
<td>A project to investigate the impact of oral and digital storytelling in formal education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenantspin</td>
<td><a href="http://alandunn67.co.uk/incompletearchive.html">http://alandunn67.co.uk/incompletearchive.html</a></td>
<td>20 years of a community broadcasting project in Liverpool</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Annex 8: Other sources reviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>URL</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Find a Story... Map a Story... Tell a Story...</td>
<td><a href="http://www.rebooting.ca/place/">http://www.rebooting.ca/place/</a></td>
<td>Creating a story map web site and teacher resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maps: A creative way to tell your stories</td>
<td><a href="http://www.mobilisationlab.org/maps-a-creative-way-to-tell-your-stories/#.WI436jmLR0s">http://www.mobilisationlab.org/maps-a-creative-way-to-tell-your-stories/#.WI436jmLR0s</a></td>
<td>Advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PISTES-SOLIDAIREs / France
www.pistes-solidaires.fr

DIE BERATER / Austria
www.dieberater.com

EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF GEOGRAPHERS / Belgium
www.eurogeography.eu

RINOVA LIMITED / United Kingdom
www.rinova.co.uk

CESIE / Italy
www.cesie.org

RIS Dvorec Rakicăn / Slovenia
www.ris-dr.si

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