

Final Summary of Exchange Seminars Conducted within the Project

“Jump@school” -
Testing A Model to Contrast Early
School Leaving

WP 8 Exploitation

Final Summary Exchange Seminars

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1. Exchange Seminars and Exploitation Plan

The Exchange Seminars (in the following named “ES”) played an important role in the setting of the Jump@School project. They are closely linked to the ‘Exploitation Plan’ (**Deliverable No 36**) and part of the **WP 8** (WP leader MetropolisNet EEIG).

The main objectives of Work Package 8 Exploitation Plan are:

- to maximise the use of results of the produced products
- to reach at least three European countries outside of the project partnership

MetropolisNet EEIG was responsible for

- the delivery of a ES Guideline
- the monitoring/ scheduling of all ES conducted by partners
- the delivery of two ES by itself
- the final summary (report) of all ES collecting the major issues and recommendations emerging from these

Through the ES it was possible to (partly) reach countries outside of the project partnership and simultaneously to involve the local, regional or national actors of the areas (stakeholders, practitioners, scientists/ experts). On the one hand ES contributed to maximise the use of the results of the project; on the other hand they enabled third actors to participate in the project - to learn, to criticise, to make use of the project results and to be inspired for one`s own work.

2. Introduction into the Exchange Seminars

2.1 Objectives of the Exchange Seminars

The overall objective of each ES was to involve and gain the perspectives of the local actors (and beyond) and to ensure knowledge transfer to those outside the project.

Special objectives aimed at:

- engaging in a prompt and extensive exchange with all relevant local actors that are in charge of Early School Leaving (ESL) and the transition from school to work or vocational training
- facilitating the establishment of such local networks
- animating the local, national and international debate on the issues of ESL
- sharing and transferring guidelines and suggestions to participants (particularly policy makers and local authorities)
- communicating recommendations to all levels (local, regional, national, European) to improve ESL prevention & promote the modernisation of educational systems.

2.2 Exchange Seminar Guideline

In a first step, MetropolisNet developed an “Exchange Seminar Guideline” (2015) which had been presented to the other partners and - after being discussed and approved - made available to them. This guideline intended to assist the partners in the planning and implementation of the ES and to guarantee a similar level of content and quality.

Moreover, the Guideline provided a proposal for selecting and attracting the target groups (stake holders, local, regional, national and EU experts and practitioners) and offered a broad variety of methods and tools on how to implement and conduct an Exchange Seminar. MetropolisNet also provided the partners with a “Reporting Template for Exchange Seminars” (2015) that had to be filled in and returned to MetropolisNet for further evaluation. This report summarises the content and results of each single ES.

It aims to:

- communicate results and recommendations to all levels dealing with ESL on local, regional, national and European level to help reduce the number of early school leavers
- consider ESL not as an isolated issue but as an integral part of the current process of modernising and re-thinking education/ educational systems
- contribute to a better individual support and social integration of youth (and their families) especially of those, living and learning under disadvantaged circumstances using knowledge and products developed out of the Jump@school project

3. Executive Summary: Outcomes and results of the Exchange Seminars

In the following, we present the main results and outcomes of the Exchange Seminars (ES).

3.1 Target Groups reached & further EU countries involved

As mentioned above, ES aimed at reaching actors at the local, national and international level. This goal was achieved.

Through the realisation of 13 ES, we reached actors in the following categories:

a) Frontline level:

Practitioners, who work on the ground-level and face-to-face with young people

b) Organisational level:

Organisations implementing projects and programmes for Early School Leavers (ESL) or truancy

c) Scientific level:

Scientists and experts who are involved in researching ESL or who are involved in experimentation settings as applied in the Jump@School project

d) Policy level:

Stakeholders, officers and politicians who are involved in developing and implementing ESF or educational, VET or employment policies

More in detail: Local actors, national and international experts or practitioners mainly in the field of education/ iVET, but also social work, teachers, school principals, psychologists, social workers, youth guidance practitioners, representatives at the policy level/ administrative level, social scientists, official departments of education (regional/ national), organisations working in the field of youth protection/ educational justice, youth NGOs, parents and NGOs working with families.

Further EU-countries reached through the ES:

The following countries were also reached by inviting experts from these countries to participate in the ES: U.K., France, Portugal.

3.2 Planned and conducted seminars

Three seminars were originally planned to be held in countries involved in the experimentation (Italy, Spain and Turkey) and in Poland, two seminars in other partner countries (Austria and Germany) - 16 seminars in total. Each seminar was planned to involve around 25 people, from partner countries and abroad. Unfortunately, Turkey was unable to hold any seminars. Due to the fact that there were problems delivering the intervention in Spain and that there had to be another intervention period, the Spanish partners could only realise one Exchange Seminar instead of three. Therefore, more Exchange Seminars were conducted in Italy; instead of 3 planned ones, six were realised (of which three were conducted in Sardinia). The overall number of 13 seminars (without Turkey) was reached. The number of participants varied from 12 up to 53 participants because of the variety of existing networks of every partner. The Italian partner (CIOFS) as a board organisation with local and national branches throughout Italy therefore reached the biggest number of seminar participants.

Table 1: Exchange Seminars planned and conducted

Exchange Seminars	Planned	Conducted
Italy	3	6
Spain (replaced Malta)	3	1
Turkey (dropped out)	3	-
Poland	3	2
Austria	2	2
Germany	2	2
Total	16	13

3.3 Main results and outcomes of the ES

To a great extent the objectives referred to in 2.1. were met. The seminars were conducted on a high level of quality regarding content, expertise of participants and results reached. This was verbally reported by people participating in the ES and through additional feedback collected and evaluated afterwards. The variety of stakeholders taking part contributed to the outcomes and recommendations of each conducted seminar. More precisely, different levels of actors (local, national, program and policy level, scientific, front-line) were involved and relevant actors in charge of ESL and transition from school to work or vocational training were directly addressed (see 3.1.). The activation and establishment of relevant stakeholders and experts contributing to these events very much depended on the contacts of each partner organisation existing in this field. The better this network was already established, the more effective the ES could build upon. The ES formed a well-received platform for a (mostly) local debate and discussion on current issues of and approaches to ESL, education and the social problems and political issues linked to these topics. Particularly the differences of educational systems and approaches but also the various political and social challenges every partner country is currently facing became clear.

The life circle of the Jump@school project as a “path of learning” is also mirrored by the development of the ES. The more we learned from this social experimentation and the challenges faced, the better this additional knowledge could be made fruitful for the ES. As a consequence, in 2017, there were more concrete suggestions and recommendations (including a “Position Paper of the Region of Sardinia”) to be shared with policy makers and local authorities coming straight from this European exchange of knowledge and transfer of practical experience.

The Operative Model: an additional product to be used

As a result of the experimental design and its limitations on the one hand and of the individual experiences Jump - Operators made by “building emotional bridges” to young students, an additional product was developed: the “Operative Model”. This document is a guideline and a tool describing all measures and activities realized with over 400 participating pupils and should be further used by schools and adapted to their needs. The discussions led on the ES and the involvement of local experts and stakeholders contributed to (the need of) the creation of this additional product.

4 Exchange Seminars per Country

In the following we summarise the different ES held in each country.

4.1 Exchange Seminars ZSI Austria

Exchange Seminar Vienna, 4th of March 2016, organised by ZSI

The first Exchange Seminar of ZSI (Centre for Social Innovation Vienna) was entitled “Social Policy Experimentation – Opportunities & Challenges in Practice” and invited researchers and other experts who regularly use experimental methods that assess social policies to discuss previous and ongoing policy experiments. The aim was to ponder on the potential of experimental methods as well as on the encountered practical problems regarding ethics, participant recruitment, random assignment, attrition and many more as well as on the statistical approaches to deal with them.

The Jump@School project and especially the experimentation model was presented and discussed with the participants in detail. In order to learn from other projects, five other researchers from four European countries were invited to present their projects. Each project presentation was followed by a thorough discussion and exchange of ideas among the participants especially on the problems or challenges encountered and how these could be overcome. This was very useful as most of the challenges that came up from the other project presentations were also relevant for Jump@School.

Main results of the ES:

- The discussion ended on a positive note with the participants agreeing to write a thought paper on challenges of social policy experimentation in practice together.
- Current challenges facing the Jump@School intervention and evaluation were discussed in detail and many interesting solutions and new perspectives were suggested, which were later explored and implemented within the project. By other people also sharing their experiences, many useful aspects were drawn which will definitely be useful for the project in the future.
- As a follow-up, a thought paper resulting from this Exchange Seminar was transferred to the European level (article in the Research EU Magazine).
- The participants of the seminar enabled a Europe-wide and international dissemination of the Jump@School project beyond the countries of the partners: Two experts/ scientists came from Portugal - a country, which is not directly involved in the Jump@School project.
- Taking into account the enormous importance of experimentation setting in the Jump@school project, this ES was very useful, in particular at that stage of the project.

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Exchange Seminar Vienna, 20th of June 2017, organised by ZSI

The target groups of this seminar were representatives and decision-makers of the “Wiener Volkshochschulen” (Adult Education Centres Vienna) (in the following: VHS). The seminar was organised in cooperation with them.

The idea of cooperating with an organisation like the VHS was to ensure that the results of the project were far-reaching. At the same time, this would provide ZSI with the opportunity to discuss the results and to talk about why they are the way they are. The VHS can be considered an expert in the area of drop-out prevention because they do not only offer courses leading to compulsory school leaving certificates, but they also provide supportive services to participants like “youth coaching” (very similar to the German practice “Truancy – the 2nd chance”, which the Jump@School intervention is mostly based on) as well as case management and social work in schools. The event was implemented as a dialogue and focused on the exchange of ideas and experiences of participants around the main themes of the project Jump@School. The main outcome and also the highlight of the event was that the discussions enabled new insights into the reasons behind the results of the impact analysis from the point of view of teachers and participants. This was because it was possible to discuss the results of individual items of the soft questionnaire in a lot of detail. These discussions were also very helpful for the “aftermath lessons learnt report” because they highlighted some aspects that had not yet been considered.

In this Exchange Seminar, the Jump@school project and its results were discussed very intensively and gave several fruitful recommendations. The discussion ended on a positive note: The participants appreciated the opportunity to not only learn more about the experiences in other countries with regard to ESL out but mostly because this event provided them with an opportunity to reflect their work and their own research.

Main results and topics discussed in the ES

The critical discussion of the Jump@School project from the point of view of scientists but also practitioners (regarding intervention, experimental design and outcomes) included the following aspects:

- The interventions were too short, the effects of the intervention needed more time to become visible and measurable.
- Statistically the sample was too small.
- The “ageing phenomenon” of young people plays a large part in many of the results (but cannot be measured statistically).
- At the beginning of the year, most pupils are very motivated while towards the end they become less motivated. Intervention and post-test were carried out in the second half of the school year, which may have influenced the results.
- When someone has had years of negative school experiences, half a year intervention may not be enough to have any effects on the grades.
- Workshops work well under certain circumstances.

- Jump Operators, the most important persons for the interventions, were external to the school system. They would have needed more time not only to build a trustful relationship with the students but also with the teaching staff and the headmasters.
- The subjective view not only of the pupils but also of the Jump-Operators and teachers should have been analysed.
- Sometimes “good students” are at risk of dropping out, because they think that they do not have to work very hard to get through school.
- A high actual absence rate of pupils often does not fit to the pupil’s subjective perception of absence.

Recommendations of the ES

1. Working on the self-esteem and motivation of pupils is extremely important.
2. Experts and teachers do not always have an idea about the real needs of pupils. The interventions showed the positive effect of working on social competencies, individual guidance and building trustful relationships with trainers and peers. These elements therefore have to be mainstreamed.
3. Strategies of early intervention mostly fail because of a lack of resources (financial, time and personnel). More flexible funding structures would be necessary to be able to try out, develop and adapt different measures without financial restrictions.
4. The competitive nature of the EU-calls often leads to more pressure in the application process itself: Organisations sometimes promise more than they can actually achieve regarding their resources. The calls – especially in the field of social experimentation - should leave more space to develop approaches fitting to the objectives of a given project, accepting a variety of measurement settings.

4.2. Exchange Seminars Germany

Exchange Seminar Berlin, 12th of October 2016, Berlin, organised by MetropolisNet

24 participants from various fields took part in this seminar: social workers, psychologists, guidance practitioners and headmasters from schools. There were several co-workers from the “SIBUZ” centres - a new cooperative structure giving individual guidance to children (and their families) dealing with multiple social, psychological problems including learning and motivational barriers. They are located in every district in Berlin and cooperate with different school types; from primary schools up to secondary schools and vocational colleges. The aim of this Exchange Seminar was to establish a network of local, national and international actors, to inform about the project progress and give an insight into the interventions in the Spanish and Italian schools. Jump-Operator (Trainer) Stefano Simola was invited from Sardinia to give an insight into the practical experiences he made during the Sardinian interventions in schools in Tortoli and Iglesias and the challenges he was confronted with. According to him, in his projects, teachers did not provide enough support. This is because most interventions took part during school time, because of a lack of information about the reason for

choosing students to take part as well as the overall structure of the experimentation and impact measurement. Parents did not provide enough support (partly) because of the same reasons: lack of information, trust in the success of the intervention and maybe also because of their own barriers (unemployment, social and health problems) and the lack of (emotional) active support of their children. Simola showed videos, which were created within the project by participating youth within the creative modules. They showed the level of activity of the youngsters, but also their fears and anxieties. The second part focused on a best practice example to combat and prevent ESL from the City of Pforzheim. It described an established long-term approach, which was the outcome of different programmes dealing with ESL (e.g. the programme “Second chance” in Germany). As a result, a sustainable cooperation between school staff, city administration and youth service was created: The department of social work in schools directly cooperates with the City administration of Pforzheim (they are located in one department) and there is a common socio-pedagogical framework for almost every school in the City. This includes the approach to ESL, drop-outs and school-avoiding behaviour in general. The relevance of both approaches for Berlin and a possible transfer of good practices were discussed in detail.

The main topics and results were as follows:

- A new local and national network has been successfully activated and informed about the project progress and the first results of the intervention.
- Participants’ interest in the project was raised and also their motivation to take part in a second seminar and to continue the network and the initiated discussion.
- The German best practice example was considered very relevant for the Berlin local ESL-level (mostly the administrative side); especially for the staff working in the SIBUZ centres. They were inspired by the solutions of Pforzheim and the possibility of cooperation on such a high administrative and operational level.
- Nevertheless, there was also scepticism towards a successful transfer of this best practice example to Berlin, because of the fact that every city district acts independently and the success always depends on the “good will” of politicians elected for a limited period of time.
- A “gap” can be identified between the established (good) practices to avoid ESL in Germany (and other EU-countries) and the transfer to Spain and Italy (especially Sardinia) where there is a constantly high rate of early school leavers.
- The rates of school drop-outs in Berlin, especially in districts with a high rate of poverty and migration (e.g. Berlin-Neukölln) are still very high. A *structured and success-oriented* cooperation between all levels/stakeholders including the policy level is urgently needed, although a variety of approaches, programs and measures to avoid and combat ESL already exists.

Exchange Seminar Berlin, 22nd of February 2017, Berlin, organised by MetropolisNet

The second Exchange Seminar, in which 18 participants took part, focused on the results of the impact measurement by ZSI Vienna, including hard facts (average grade) and soft facts (pre- and post-questionnaire before and after the intervention) and on the qualitative inquiry realised by IVAL Milano, based on interviews with different stakeholders, directly and indirectly involved in the Jump@School experimentation. The aim of the seminar was to present and explain the results and provide the attendees with a deeper understanding of the nature of a so called “social experimentation”, bringing challenges, limitations and lessons learned into the discussion. In order to better understand the content and approach of this measurement, but concentrating on the qualitative inquiry, a presentation of its structure and main outcomes was given by IVAL Milano who are responsible for the qualitative evaluation of the experimentation and the project as a whole. As - other than expected - the statistical impact measurement by ZSI did not bring enough evidence of the positive impact of the intervention realised in four schools in Valencia and Sardinia, the results of the qualitative inquiry became more relevant to receive a fuller picture. A more complete picture of the complex setting within the schools and the conflict situations that arose in regard to the project design, which had to meet the rules of an experimentation setting (e.g. the need for a control group, the limited information given to teachers and the part randomisation in the choice of students taking part) were gained and it could be better understood why the results were not as positive as expected (the grade point average of students taking part in the intervention did not improve).

Through the qualitative inquiry and its reflective character, it became evident, that there are significant “gaps” between the time structure of the interventions (which lasted 6 months, mainly to meet with the experimental evaluation requirements), the time needed by the students to understand their own learning process and the period of time needed to integrate everything into daily life and practice. A change of previous school and learning routines, which were established for years needs to include time and space for reflection.

To understand why you can never start early enough to prevent school drop-outs (or better: to keep the learning motivation always as high as possible), another international best practice project was invited to the seminar. Nina Staebler presented the programme “Work week for primary school kids”, which is part of a bigger programme initiated several years ago by the social organisation 15 Billion (London). It provides schools with “external” working experience modules for kids from kindergarten up to high school age. The main aim is not to bring forward the choice of a professional career, but to stimulate learning and individual growth through involvement, engagement and enthusiasm *from an early age on*.

Main results, feedback and topics discussed:

- The presentations in the first part of the seminar were well received and discussed. The network was further expanded, another European partner was reached and it was possible to build on the results of the first seminar in 2016.

- The *Work Week* program (London) was very much appreciated by the seminar participants and they welcomed a programme to be adapted and transferred to the needs of the German educational system.
- It was stated that schools in Germany do open up to external structures more and more, but are still very unexperienced and cautious concerning the active cooperation with (local) business and commercial structures.
- In the second part of the seminar, recommendations on ESL prevention for the local (Berlin) level including general recommendations relevant for European partners were developed and presented to the audience. They were based on a set of questions, and involved the experts knowledge and the conclusions of the presentations and reflections from the first part of the seminar.

Recommendations from both ES in Berlin

“INTERAGENCY” LEVEL

1. Communication and concrete cooperation in the form of regular “clearing rounds” between school headmasters, teachers, youth welfare service, social work in schools, SIBUZ-centres (school psychologists) and the policy level (e.g. Berlin Senate / Department of Education) should be established (as e.g. already practiced in the district of Berlin- Pankow).
2. Binding procedures concerning prevention and reaction on ESL have to be established and monitored which should include information from all sides involved as well as a common use of forms.
3. A more diversified offer of social guidance and concrete help for children/ youth with parents having psychological and psychiatric problems/diseases and other health problems has to be developed (in and outside school structures).
4. Valuable and successfully evaluated projects to prevent and combat ESL have to be made *sustainable* (especially financially) and further programs to support youth with multiple problems have to be created continuously, taking into account results of this project.

INSIDE SCHOOL – LEVEL (prevent and react)

5. Social work has to be implemented in all schools, accessible for all pupils from an early age on and on a high quality level (which should be regularly monitored and improved).
6. Multiprofessional support teams for ESL prevention within schools including peer mentoring should be implemented.
7. The linking of the school curriculum to the “outside world” and cooperation with external partners/ e.g. employers is extremely important.
8. The establishment of (external) “practical” classes with a special curriculum focused on the individual needs of students (working with very small groups of learners) can be recommended as a reactive approach to ESL (this approach is successful in Berlin and worth transferring to other EU-countries).
9. An important aspect is a holistic pedagogical approach – may it be preventive or reactive to ESL - which helps build the emotional and social competencies of young people and involves their families as well when re-integrating youth into the regular school system.

4.3. Exchange Seminars Poland

Exchange Seminar Gdansk, 30th of June 2016, conducted by Caritas Gdansk

This ES aimed at networking with local and regional actors, spreading knowledge about the Jump@School project and building partnerships to improve ESL prevention. 20 participants from various branches, such as social welfare and labour offices, youth NGOs, employer organisations and the Chamber of Craft took part. The seminar took place after the announcement of a school reform in Poland, which will be put in place in Autumn 2017. This reform can be seen as a return to the previous school system in Poland and has caused a lot of mixed emotions and dispute.

Main topics and results of the ES:

- All partners agreed with the inadequacy of the Polish education system and that ESL is a very important aspect often determining the success of the entire education process.
- The need for *counselling children and young people in schools* was strongly emphasised.
- The participants, representing the whole voivodship, were not familiar with the Jump@School project before; therefore the presentation of the project stimulated discussions regarding the current (political) situation in Poland.
- Everyone was concerned about the enormous struggle of young people to fulfil the expectations set by an educational system that is inadequate with regard to pupils' needs and especially to the needs of today's labour market.
- Looking for new solutions, the partners and participants considered some of the topics and results from the Jump@School project.

Exchange Seminar Wrzesnia, 21.06.2016, by Meridium, Poland

The second Polish ES brought headmasters of schools, a TRE®-Expert (Method of stress reduction), teachers and parents together. The Polish partners presented the Jump@School project and emphasised how important it is to encourage young people to continue their educational path. There were also presentations from other participants, analysing the current situation and extension of the ESL phenomenon in Poland and in special schools that were attending. In most cases, the cause of drop-outs from school was students' poor performance, lack of required attendance at classes and family problems (addictions, poverty, lack of parental care, health problems).

Main topics discussed:

- The teachers who present at the seminar shared their experiences from their own schools and classes and asked for concrete preventive methods that are used in the Secondary School Complex in Konin.

- The discussion focused mainly on the approach of educators to difficult youth issues and the difficulty of obtaining satisfactory cooperation from families of these students.
- The head teacher Mr. Kucharczyk and other teachers also gave examples of cooperation involving the school counsellor and psychologist.
- Again, in this Exchange Seminar the upcoming Polish policy reforms for schools were discussed. The Polish education system awaits big changes in the next few years - including blanking Junior High Schools and going back to eight-year primary school. At the end of the seminar a humorous video was presented in relation to ESL (see also: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hVab2swE5CA&feature=youtu.be>).

Main topics and results of the ES:

- The Polish educational system was compared to other European countries. It questioned whether the proposed changes will significantly affect the level of education.
- The attending teachers were afraid of the chaos and the growth of bureaucracy in schools. Even more, they feared the reform could result in the loss of jobs for many teachers currently teaching in middle schools.
- Against this background, the educational system in Poland will not improve in terms of ESL, according to the voices of some attendees.
- One of the participants at the ES was a licensed TRE® provider (TRE = Tension and Trauma Releasing Exercises) who described how the destructive role of stress can be reduced by exercises and how trauma can be healed through this method. With regard to the topic of ESL, she highlighted that stress associated with poor performance at school and the lack of support in the family is a major cause of ESL.
- The discussion resulted in the proposal to use this method for combatting early school leaving. The participants were very satisfied with the participation in this exchange and expressed great interest in the project Jump@School and the use of TRE® at work and in everyday life.

Recommendations from the ES in Poland

1. The Polish educational system is seen as inadequate and has to adapt to the needs of the students of today. There is a strong need for modernisation.
2. The individual counselling of students and families has to be implemented inside and outside schools to a greater extent than now available.
3. Teachers urgently need to receive further training and concrete tools to deal with the growing problems of youngsters related to stress in school. This would be a benefit the school staff could make use of as well.
4. The criticism of the upcoming Polish educational reform and the protest of teachers should be used to develop progressive school curricula instead of going back to educational values and structures with no link to the needs and potentials of young people in Poland today.

4.4. Exchange Seminars Italy

Initially, three ES were planned in Italy. However, more ES could be realised, which is a very positive result. Altogether six ES took place in Italy: two in Bologna, one in Padova and three in the Sardinia Region (Cagliari and Mogoro).

The Exchange Seminars in Bologna

The ES in Bologna were organised by Ciofs-FP in Bologna in close cooperation with the existing city network on combating ESL. This has allowed a rich and deep exchange on the methods, results and recommendations from the European to the local level and vice versa.

Exchange Seminar Bologna, 9th of March 2017, organised by CIOFS-FP

The aim of this seminar was to make public the results of the Jump@School project. The target group was a big and well-structured network of 82 participants from the educational field, strongly embedded in Bologna city, as well as in the hinterland, who, for several years, have been working on issues linked to youngsters' drop-outs from school and educational paths. Over the past years, this network has not only introduced several structural and methodological innovations but also implemented procedures and approaches to better deal with the problem of ESL at the regional, national and European level. As an outcome of a number of meetings of this network, a research study has been produced and published and was also presented at the seminar. A specific seminar session was dedicated to the comparison of experiences of cities like Bologna, Lucca and Ancona touching upon themes closely linked to the Jump@School project and the experiences made in the course of the project period: 1) Groundbreaking ways to involve families in the counter-action against educational drop-out 2) Enhancement and acknowledgement of youngsters' competencies, which could be gained both in a formal and informal way. Particular attention was placed on the counterfactual evaluation method and the difficulties of applying it in social, vocational and educational settings. There was much appreciation for the impact measurement that was carried out and the different ways of evaluation within the Jump@School project. The network plans to keep on working on the theme of evaluation and identification of tools, which could safeguard a good balance between quantitative and qualitative dimensions.

The high attendance of the seminar, the depth of reflection and open sharing of experiences between the operational and political level can be seen as a very positive result of the Exchange Seminar. It brought about a fruitful exchange of medium and long-term strategies against school drop-outs with a common note regarding the need of a closer cooperation between the public and private sectors in the future. This can surely be regarded as evidence of the deep interest in working on the issue of preventing school drop-outs and further exchanging ideas, strategies and innovations between facilitators/stakeholders and decision makers. Through this seminar, the network has been strengthened and enlarged and its ability to concretely cooperate has been brought further. Apart from that, the seminar was able to make participants familiar with opportunities offered in this field by the European Union and

the chance to develop new planning and intervention strategies. A collective exchange of the planning hypothesis for a follow-up Erasmus+ project, focusing on the engagement of families as a protective and precautionary factor to prevent drop-outs, which is being developed within the local network, was another productive result of this Exchange Seminar. In addition to this, the region's strategic development directions were shared with the seminar audience, thanks to the participation of council members of the Bologna Municipality and the Metropolitan City together with members of the scholar system.

From the content and organisational point of view as well as regarding the high attendance and expertise of participants, the success of this seminar can be regarded as “beyond each expectation”. In addition to this, the active involvement and participation of VET students in the seminar organisation and seminar itself was highly appreciated by the seminar participants.

Exchange Seminar Bologna, 18th of April 2016, organised by CIOFS FP

The ES entitled “Best and smart practices! Successful learning paths to tackle ESL” took place in the new science city in Bologna “Opificio Golinelli”, where innovative, educational activities and laboratories take place. It was facilitated by Franco Floris, editor of “Animastione sociale magazine” with a special focus on meaningful learning models (“Towards a new education paradigm”). 46 participants took part. The seminar was addressed to teachers, trainers, coordinators and tutors of education and vocational training paths, school chief officers and directors of training centres. Mrs Arrighi and Mrs Garavini attended as representatives of the regional government department.

Main results and recommendations of the ES:

- Within the seminar, elements of the Jump@School project and the “Le belle e buone prassi - Action research” (best practices to tackle ESL, Bologna Region) were analysed and compared. Four leading questions were further discussed within thematic workshops.
- As a result of the comparison of methodical elements of “Action research” and “Jump@School”, several important aspects were identified:
- First of all, a good case management is important to establish cooperative approaches between coordinators, tutors, teachers (Jump Operators) and the class, as well as between families of pupils, social services and the wider educational network.
- A second very important aspect covered by both models is a positive educational relationship building within the class and between the different professional roles (tutors and coordinators as an “educational couple”) which should cover different aspects including emotional ones.
- Another important aspect mentioned is the importance of individualising interventions according to the individual needs of pupils and his or her personal boundaries.
- Further aspects named were closeness to the youth world, the willingness to implement interdisciplinary approaches, a focus on personal strengths, the active inclusion

of pupils in the decision-making processes, and a belief in the abilities of young people as producers and presenters of “their own stuff”.

- Other learning paths to reach new competencies should also be provided, in addition to individual mentoring and team working elements, a link with the job world and networking with other service providers.

The reflections on the methodical elements emerging from the Jump@School intervention and those highlighted by the “Action research” shall help to renew the actual learning path in vocational training centres in the City of Bologna and the region.

The Exchange Seminars in Sardinia

The exchange seminars in Sardinia, Italian location of the J@S experimentation, was planned and carried out as a comprehensive path, in three steps, by the Region Sardinia/VET department (project applicant) and Ciofs-FP, responsible for the operational aspects of the experimentation.

The first seminar was targeting policy makers and practitioners from several connected fields (education, training, social services, etc), with the aim of exploring and comparing policy experiences on ESL. The second seminar went a step further, transferring the results of the J@S experience and tracing a possible path to implement its best results into a sustained Sardinian strategy against ESL.

The third seminar was wrapping the results of the debate initiated with all these actors and stakeholders, and drafted a position paper of all actors and stakeholders involved to be presented and shared at the project final conference. As it will be later highlighted, one of the most significant achievements of this path was the agreement to integrate J@S elements in a wide multi annual program to combat ESL in Sardinia, Tutti@Iscola, and the strengthened cooperation between the VET and the Education departments of the Region on these topics.

Exchange Seminar Cagliari, 30th of June 2016, organised by CIOFS FP

The ES entitled “Preventing and combating early school leaving. Comparing experiences” took place in Cagliari and was organised by Sardinia Region/ Regional Department of further Training and VET and facilitated by the director Roberto Doneddu. 53 participants from various fields, such as schools, VET centres, social welfare and labour offices from Sardinia and other parts of Italy took part. The aim of this first seminar was to reflect on policies and practices to prevent and combat ESL in the region of Sardinia, the discussion of the general framework of the interventions and analysis of the practices in place, as well as the comparison with other national and European realities. The speakers gave an overview of the plan to combat ESL in higher education and the policies and practices to combat and prevent ESL in the Emilia Romagna Region, Valencia (Spain) and Dublin (Ireland).

Results and recommendations of the ES

- It was agreed that the results of interventions within the project need to be mainstreamed and at the same time be made sustainable.
- Participants further agreed on the serious need for a more diversified educational and pedagogical offer from schools and declared their interest in being part of the project network.

Exchange Seminar Mogoro, 4th of May 2017 organised by Sardinia Region

The aim of the second seminar in Sardinia was to share the “lessons learned” during the implementation of the Jump@School project, to compare best practices gained in the field by operators in the specific sphere of interest, to share scenarios at local and regional level and to integrate more effectively aspects of EU experimentation into future regional and community policy actions. The 32 participants that took part in the seminar, facilitated by Roberto Donneddu, came from various educational “branches”. They represented schools, VET centres, social welfare and labour offices, public authorities, universities and research institutes. An important element of the seminar was the involvement of several headmasters from schools and mayors of the socio-economic district, to which Mogoro belongs. Here, district schools, municipalities, researchers, public and private social services and citizens worked together over the past year to design changes in schools to better deal with ESL issues. They were very interested in the in the Jump@School experience and method and gave suggestions and recommendations to improve the situation in Mogoro.

The seminar focused on the most appropriate evaluation techniques for early detection of school leaving/ drop-out risks and trends in the light of gained experiences. From this perspective, the discussion among the actors of education and vocational training policies on the scenarios at the local level, the results of the quantitative and qualitative evaluation of the experimentation that took place in the schools in Sardinia and Spain within the scope of the Jump@School project, the actions taken by the regional administration, particularly within the Iscol@project and the prospects derived from the new regulatory framework defined with the approval of the so-called “Good school” law, were considered essential. In the afternoon session of the Exchange Seminar, participants defined possible project developments for the future, made proposals for decision makers and identified possible pathways for the development of a large and participatory network among actors involved in education and training. It was suggested that such a network should effectively undertake and monitor counteractions, according to a logic consistent with multilevel governance instances. As it was stated in the first seminar in Sardinia, participants noted the need for more intensive work with youngsters, a more diversified educational and pedagogical offer from schools and a better networking cooperation to face the complex problems linked to ESL.

Exchange Seminar Cagliari, 5th of June 2017, organised by Sardinia Region

This seminar, entitled “The regional policies to prevent ESL: What are the achievements compared to the European Education and Training 2020 Strategic Framework?” summarised the approach of the Jump@School project based on the main factors causing ESL. The topics were:

1. Prevention policies of ESL at the local level – which tools and criteria are relevant to a phenomenon analysis and effective planning in view of the approaching 2020 targets?
2. “In and out of school” - the introduction of an independent figure within schools: The Jump Operator as an intermediary between students and school personnel
3. The counterfactual approach to ESL contrast interventions: Strengths and weaknesses

A final goal of the last exchange seminar in Italy was to agree on the drafting of a position paper illustrating the state of the art in relation to the conclusions of the EU Council regarding the issue of school drop-outs and the promotion of school success. Participants in the seminar were researchers, teachers in education and VET, as well as social servants. From the policy level, the General Director of Public Education, Cultural Heritage, Information and Sport Department took part in the seminar as well as the Director of the Vocational Training Unit of the Sardinia Region (project lead). The two main results and conclusions discussed were that participants agreed on writing a position paper based on the recommendations of the Jump@School project highlighting ESL preventing policies and further mainstreaming interventions realised within the project. Another positive result is the agreement of the general directors to join an already running ESL prevention programme coordinated by the Education Department (Tutti a iscol@) with the main elements of the Jump@School model.

Exchange Seminar Padova, 21st of April 2017: “Impact evaluation on programs facing ESL”, organised by IVAL Milano

The Exchange Seminar in Padova took place in the framework of the XX National AIV Congress (XX National Congress of Italian Evaluation Society) with 24 national professional evaluators who took part both as an audience and as lecturers. In front of a group of experts in the field of educational and social evaluation, the general Jump@School project intervention design (pre-test, post-test control measures), the criteria used for the sample selection and the main outcome measures used were presented. An analysis of some of the impact evaluation results was proposed in order to stimulate a discussion on the nature and appropriateness of the intervention design with respect to the phenomenon of the ESL and the educational sector. A further aim was to stimulate the discussion on counterfactual evaluation methods and their suitability with respect to public programs and projects and to gather fruitful insights and recommendations for this field in the future. All participants were asked to contribute to the debate with their direct expertise in order to strive for lessons for the project evaluation system.

Several examples of evaluation methods and different approaches were presented in order to stimulate the discussion around the multidimensional features of the evaluation process. Veronica Presti (University of Rome) presented an example of evaluation based on the “positive thinking approach”, which is an adaptive approach that considers mainly the successful elements of an intervention in order to produce its evaluative conclusions. Giancarlo Vecchi (University of Milan) focused his example on the ontology theory and methodology of evaluative research including an example of counterfactual impact evaluation on a major welfare programme, while Nicola Orlando (IRS – Institute for Social Research) highlighted a counterfactual measurement of the impact results of a youth employment programme financed by the European Social Fund. Juliet Tschank (ZSI) presented the main features of the Jump@School intervention design and the main results achieved through its impact assessment activities. The method used to select and randomly assign our target group of beneficiaries to the intervention was explained, as well as the measurement instruments used and the main challenges faced during and after the completion of the experimentation. The inputs from the discussion might constitute some valuable policy recommendations for programmes or pilot projects in several fields of implementation:

Recommendations

1. The choice of the evaluative research question is strictly related to the evaluative approach, which determines the evaluation results themselves. This is an important consideration when dealing with public programmes and projects, which often involve several stakeholders/ stakeholder groups.
2. When it comes to supporting public policies and programmes, useful strategies of evaluation are those based on negotiation and reflective learning with relevant actors and professionals who can contribute to the research evaluation design.
3. It is crucial to design new approaches to evaluation of public programmes, which can foster change and innovation especially in fragile contexts and fields of action (empowering evaluation).
4. The evaluation process should not merely be focussed on the collection of results but also on a structural change to be produced.
5. Scientific evidence of the effectiveness of a programme/ policy can largely vary according to the evaluator’s perspective (constructive approach, pragmatic approach etc.) and to the phase of the policy making process. A pluralism of evidence implies a pluralism of evaluative instruments and techniques, which is one of the main reasons for the need of a dialogue between evaluators and policy makers.
6. The evaluation process can make people within a programme change their views and perspectives according to the experiences they make. therefore, a carefully chosen ontology and multidimensionality of evaluative approaches is important. The Jump@School intervention therefore implemented a dual evaluation based on a counterfactual assessment of the impact results and a more qualitative evaluation to analyse process and context elements.

4.5. Exchange Seminars Spain

Exchange Seminar Valencia, 26th of September 2016, organised by FCVPE Valencia

The ES entitled “Jump@School Exchange Seminar” took place with mostly project-related participants, including the Spanish and Italian Jump Operators and project partners. The Regional Department of Vocational and Educational Training of the Sardinia Region also took part. The first part of the ES was dedicated to the current progress of the interventions and the report about what happened/is going to happen from the design of the intervention until the end of the experimentation. This was followed by detailed reports about the experiences of the Jump Operators implementing the measures in schools in Italy (Tortoli and Iglesias) and Spain (Valencia) and their reflection on the successes, problems, bottlenecks and solutions in this process. After having set the milestones proposed by the Jump@School model of intervention, participants discussed in small groups the most important topics and challenges emerging from the experimentation setting. The situation in Spain requested a change in how the interventions were carried out. Due to the restrictions of the Spanish school system the Jump Operators had to work “horizontally” every day in the schools at the end of the lessons with little chance to organise activities during lesson time. Nevertheless, the realised interventions that were shifted to the afternoon hours were successful and the feedback of pupils was very positive. It is seen as a natural process similar to that of a classical “social worker” of adapting work to the given environment and to figure out possible variances and key elements.

Thematically, the ES therefore focused on:

- the evolution of the project from the beginning up to now, the lessons learnt so far and recommendations from/to teachers
- Critical review of the methodology (LMI) including ethical questions of random assignment, need of a control group and the specific situation in Spain
- Competencies of a Jump Operator - a (new) & needed professional?
- Other (best) practice models, alternative educational pathways /comparison

After the seminar, the partnership realised that the LMI had to be modified in order to include missing aspects considered important in the process of implementation. It is planned to share the results of the project with the Regional Ministry of Education. A second stage of the intervention will be realised in Spain.

Recommendations concretely related to the implementation process of the Logic Model (LMI)

1. Due to the differences and restrictions of the Spanish school system, the Logic Model has to be adapted to the local Spanish context.
2. The presence of Jump Operators needs to be coordinated better. Therefore, a better cooperation inside & outside the schools, also between teachers and parents is necessary. There must be an interest in cooperating as a network inside the school.
3. Jump Operators need to have access to the academic/ personal results of students.
4. Involving teachers at least for the organisation of workshops and setting topics could be relevant in the future.

Recommendations from the Jump Operator's experience / Outcome of the workshops:

1. Motivation and self-esteem is *crucial* for succeeding in school. This was another result coming directly from the trainers' perspective and experience.
2. Links with the "world of work" / work-based learning experiences are useful to set "role models" and develop social competencies. The workshops gave good examples of this.
3. Informal learning settings have to be integrated into the whole educational process and not at a stage when problems related to ESL become evident. Time, space and personnel has to be given to schools to succeed in this task.
4. The trustful relationships students were building with the Jump Operators gave evidence of this as a significant way to bring young people forward.
5. Schools can become a co-owner and co-designer of the realised intervention design and adapt it further to their individual needs and resources.

5 Conclusions for the European Level

The collected outcome of the ES gives evidence of the fact that Early School Leaving is a very complex phenomenon which can only be understood and dealt with, if a multitude of perspectives, approaches and instruments is considered. The ES held in Italy, Spain, Austria Poland and Germany brought experts and stakeholders from local, regional, national up to the policy level together to present additional good practice and give recommendations for future steps.

In the following, we summarize which approaches and examples, presented and reflected in the ES are worth to be mainstreamed.

1. The Jump – Operator: a new profile in the educational panorama

One of the success factors within the Jump@school project was the created profile of a “Jump-Operator”; as an expert for youth, external to the school, who brings in a mix of knowledge including creative competencies. The Jump - Operator combines several professional skills, like f. e. those of a social-worker, a psychologist, a mediator and a cultural trainer. He creates excellent alternative pathways by showing young people what they are able to do and make them discover new talents they didn’t know about before. He develops new formats of informal learning and encourages young people not only to finish school but to manage the transition from school to work confidently. By the participants of most ES, this new professional profile was regarded as an added value to schools and to the concrete support of students.

This professional has been appreciated and considered relevant both in the Spanish and Italian panorama, by all stakeholders involved in the process and in its evaluation.

5. Jump@school Interventions: a curriculum to be continued in Sardinia and other Regions

The general directors of Public Education, Cultural Heritage, Information and Sports Department and the Director of the Vocational Training Unit in Sardinia agreed to join an already running project (Tutti@iscola) with the main elements of the jump at school model on the last ES taking place in Sardinia on the 5th of June. This ensures that schools in the Sardinia Region will further benefit from the developed Jump@school curriculum and are able to adapt it to their individual needs. There is an indication for the Jump@school interventions to be further explored, adapted and used – beyond Sardinia and Spain and beyond the running time of the project.

2. Case management, youth coaching and social work in schools: a reality in Germany and Austria, which proved to be urgent and relevant for other countries

The J@S design had been centered on the combination of youth coaching, social work and individual approach to combat ESL. This has proved to be relevant and necessary also in the other countries involved in the project, especially Italy and Spain where the experimentations took place. The ES have been a platform to exchange, deepen and formalize the In Germany and Austria there are similar approaches of good practices combining good quality of social work with youth coaching and case management in schools to help pupils in danger of drop out/ early school leavers. There is often an agreement between the schools, the department of youth welfare and the police to directly collaborate; sometimes in so-called "clearing rounds". In the city of Pforzheim (see first ES Germany) the department of Social Work in schools developed a unique and standardised pedagogical concept for ESL used in almost all schools in the town. There is an intensive cooperation with the police and the Municipality. This kind of collaboration also exists in some districts in Berlin like f.e. Berlin-Pankow and Berlin - Charlottenburg, where special agreements were set up between different institutions to better support pupils that have dropped out of the system or are in danger.

3. SIBUZ Centres: Social and Psychological Support Centres for Inclusion and Guidance in Berlin

These centres consist of multi-professional teams of school psychologists, social-workers and special pedagogues. They give personal guidance and concrete support to families of children with school problems, different barriers and needs up to psychological and psychiatric diseases and are open towards new approaches, also in dealing with ESL.

4. Extracurricular classes and Work- Based Learning to re-integrate pupils

A variety of programs and measures existing, focuses on the re-integration of students with severe problems to finish school, see f.e. Second Chance Program Poland/ Germany. In this context several best practice measures were named on the German ES ; the so called Extracurricular Classes with specialised teachers working mostly practically (f.e. using the Work Based Learning) with very small groups of students for a 1 to 2 year period, were seen as a central good practice. Because of the high rate of re-integration into regular educational systems, this concept is worth to be further mainstreamed.

Tasks for the future in dealing with and combating ESL

No matter how progressive the educational system of a European Country might be and how detailed the instruments to re-integrate individuals into the system – there still is a need for action and improvement. We therefore recommend the following to be considered by policy-makers:

- Drop-out prevention has to start at a much earlier stage. The motivation for school starts to drop often by the end of primary school. At a point where a youngster has already resigned and given up (for years), all measures can be too late.
- Preventive steps have to be developed carefully by all relevant levels and stakeholders and to be implemented in all national educational curricula - Europe-wide.
- Schools need to be provided with more free space within educational curricula, with more personnel, with resources for further training and advice from officials

A long term process with a long term value: to be continued

The essential elements of the interventions, individual guidance, informal learning, group activities and work on self-development of young people within schools and in transition to vocational training is a long-term process, which can only succeed with a common effort - financially, structurally and in a sense of quality of education.

If this is given, a valuable contribution to a better individual support and social integration of youth (and their families) especially of those, living and learning under disadvantaged circumstances can be reached. As a consequence, it should become evident, that the number of early school leavers can be further reduced.

Furthermore, the development of sustainable approaches to ESL as an integral part of educational policy-making, is a chance to improve education as a whole, providing equal chances to everybody willing to learn.