

Concept of an online portal of good practices to tackle ESL¹

1. *Rationale: the need*

Educational methodology is traditionally considered an intimate and personal *know-how* with endless and non-repeatable variations of classroom application. Our **main hypothesis** is that there are some pedagogical approaches² which can easily be standardized and exchange with other stakeholders with some benefit. Our aim is not the provision of 'copy past' educational solutions related to ESL, but to provide a down-to earth collection of inspiring **practices**. Since the European Union has put ESL in the centre of its educational strategy in 'Europe 2020' and several, mostly at policy-level, collection of possible solutions have been gathered already (see below). Nevertheless we think that the exchange of educational ideas concerning ESL should be **more practice-oriented**.

Our proposal is to create a platform with the aim professionalization of preventing ESL with some useful, probably tested educational solutions in order to inspire practitioners and develop (towards concrete and practical solutions) the current European discourse on ESL. Our approach is not exceptional. There are several examples of practice-oriented educational portals with strong focus and visual services. US-based *Edutopia* is a perfect example of that.³

2. *What is a good practice?*

Good practice can be any full-fledged or partial educational activity resulting in reducing ESL. Good practice relates to education but it can be provided by non-educational actors too, sometimes outside of the school. **Good practice can cover** both interpersonal techniques of teaching and learning and the school level organisation and management of individual learning paths.

The description of good practice is a **standardized product, method** of a „case“, inspiring educational policy, strategy, program or method supported by text, sound, video and/or picture files, presentations and even training materials. The good practices will be available on the platform, in downloadable format.

¹ *ESL definition according to the thematic working group*: those young people who leave education and training with only lower secondary education or less, and who are no longer in education and training. ESL means those 18-24 year olds who have only lower secondary education or less and no longer in education or training. http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/doc/esl-group-report_en.pdf

² Pedagogical elements mean both interpersonal techniques of teaching and learning and the school-level organisation and management of individual learning paths.

³ <http://www.edutopia.org/videos>

We propose the following standardized form for cases⁴ (representing good practice):

Title of the good practice

Name of the organisation:

Short description of the case in three sentences: main aim, results, activity, organisational context.

Core text: a detailed, transparent and practical description of the educational problem, the organisational context, preconditions, success factors, resource requirements, follow-up methods, involvement of colleagues, guides for users and related literature. The core text is enriched by links to text, picture and video files.

Learning outcomes of the tested example: knowledge / skills / competences acquired (if possible: measured) due to the used method, practice... etc. both at teacher and/or student level. Indicators, measures before / after, assessment methodology

Risks, limits and possible prevention: forecasted risks, possible side/negative effects, guides for adaptation and how to avoid risks.

Follow up and its results: if relevant

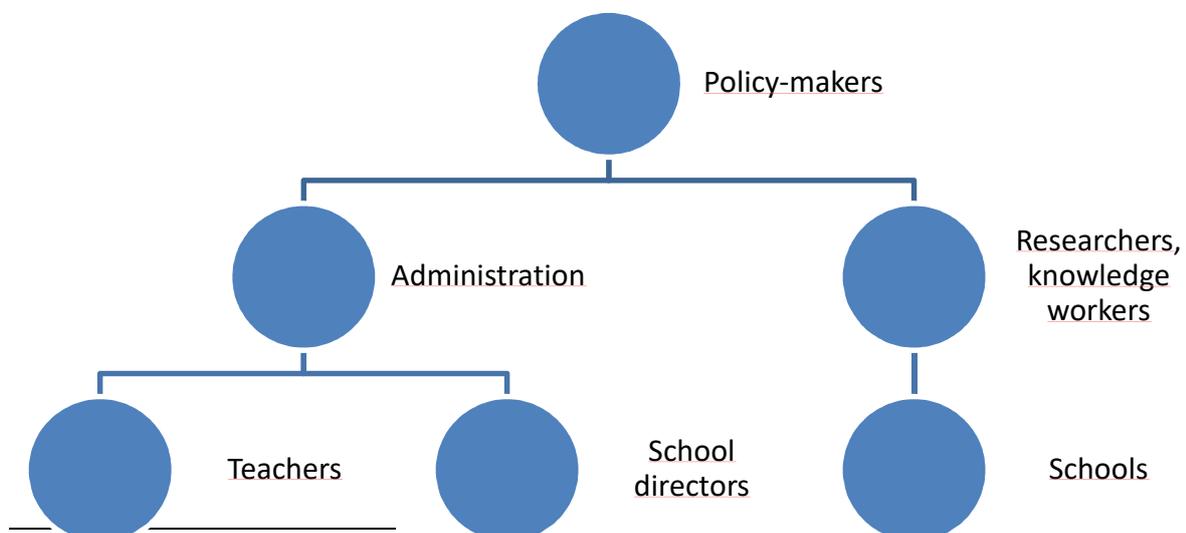
Age group: (the good practice relevant for...)

Contact person: contact details

Further information, attachments:

In order to ensure **quality assurance** measures, good practices will be checked and validated by the project partners before uploading and making them available.

The ESL field is constructed by three levels and six core players (see the Figure below). Our **portal can cover several fields and multilevel players**, but the actual *Schwerpunkt* can only be identified once a short overview is done on the currently existing European data



⁴ Expanzio will provide a separate template for collecting good practices

collections.

3. ESL-related collections in the EU

This short European survey helps us **to find the 'market niche'** for the proposed portal. Fortunately, the European scene is not empty altogether. The following short list consist of the most important documents on the topic, going from macro to micro-level:

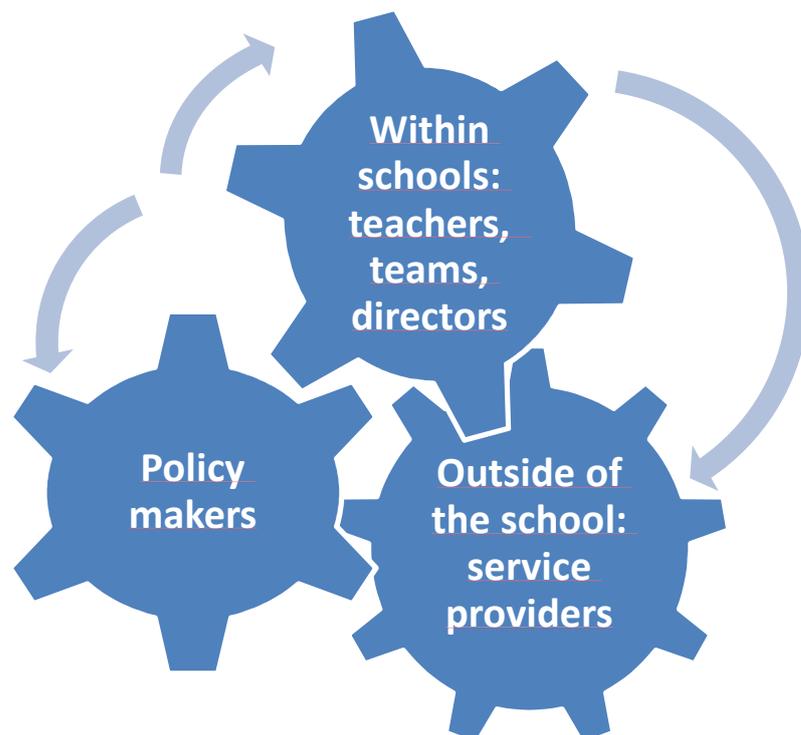
1. The Eurydice – Cedefop 2014 joint report 'Tackling Early Leaving from Education and Training in Europe. Strategies, Policies and Measures.' It provides a European and country based analysis on the data collection, strategy, policies, cross-sectoral cooperation and career guidance related to ESL. It is written from a macro-level approach, but it can serve as a good starting point of our literary survey. http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/175EN.pdf
2. Thematic Working Group on 'Early School Leaving' worked from December 2011 to November 2013 with experts nominated by 31 European countries, and stakeholder organisations. The group's concluded policy-level recommendations with highlights on the balance between central and local measures, although the document itself contains only national, systematic level examples and recommendations. Nevertheless the conclusions suggest that strong involvement and commitment of different actors, including several levels, such as parents, students, local communities, youth, social and employment services and businesses is essential. http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/doc/esl-group-report_en.pdf
3. A 2015 report of DG Education and Culture 'A whole school approach to tackling early school leaving. Policy messages' shifts the focus to the school level. The report summarized the best policy practices in five areas: school governance, learner support, teachers, parents and families and finally stakeholder involvement. The report itself is a rather abstract level summary of good practices. http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/expert-groups/documents/early-leaving-policy_en.pdf
4. A Commission Staff working paper 'Reducing early school leaving' provides a systematic selection of best practices across Europe. The best practices cover all possible levels from macro-level policies to school-practices. http://hubmiur.pubblica.istruzione.it/alfresco/d/d/workspace/SpacesStore/aa9c6762-9ed2-4d65-8f4d-46b418411e3f/early_school_leavers_ue2011.pdf
5. The School Education Gateway is a portal very close to our approach (representing the Edutopia approach). It is providing some useful good practices in a standardized form with links to other materials. The portal has something to share in ESL too. It is a clearly developing product, half full – half empty at the moment. It is utterly important to discuss our position concerning the School Education Gateway (collaboration vs. negligence).

<http://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/en/pub/resources/toolkitsforschools.htm>

6. The School Leadership Toolkit is a well-structured and beautifully designed portal for school managers and teachers. Its main target groups are the school directors. The subtopics are well structured, but the descriptions are rather large *corpora* of text with rich links to researches, reports and training materials. The portal is more an online tool for school leadership academies than a practical site of good practices. <http://toolkit.schoolleadership.eu/>
7. Finally, Brightlight on Education is a commercial product (currently only in demo version) providing pedagogical data services in the core areas of teaching and learning. It clearly shows how educational solutions will be marketized and digitalized in the future. <https://brightlighton.net/home/>

4. Who are our target groups?

In the above described survey we identified a European **market-niche** in the ESL-related area of good practices **on the practical level**. It covers interpersonal techniques of teaching and learning and the reflexive organisation and management of individual learning paths. Consequently, our main customers would be the following groups:



- **The primary target group** of the good examples will have a “**within school**” view. It includes:
 - a. **teachers, team of teachers and the core group around them.** The core group means those non-teaching staff within the school who work together with the teachers on prevention, intervention. They can be school psychologist, counsellors, career guidance advisors, student

coaches, members of the student health team... etc. They need methods, tools to react possibly at the stage of prevention.

- b. Together with the teachers, the **other target group** of good examples are the **school leaders** (directors, principals, decision-makers at school level) since they can affect the schools' atmosphere, the working methods in order to help to prevent / react to drop-outs. They are a kind of intermediaries between the teachers and the service providers, administrators hence they cannot be left out according to our view.
 - The **second target group** has an **"outside school"** view. It includes mainly **service providers**. This group comprises the local / regional child protection authorities, pedagogical service providers, municipalities' (owners, maintenances of schools) related staff at local / regional / national level depending on the country's system.
 - **Policy makers** will be the **third target group**.
 - *Researchers and knowledge workers* are not our target groups although they can be involved in the focus group discussion.
 - *Parents and/or students* could be targeted indirectly. According to our view they cannot be direct but secondary target groups. Good practices should fill this gap and provide practical examples to teachers / staff / directors / service providers on how to work with students, cooperate with parents.

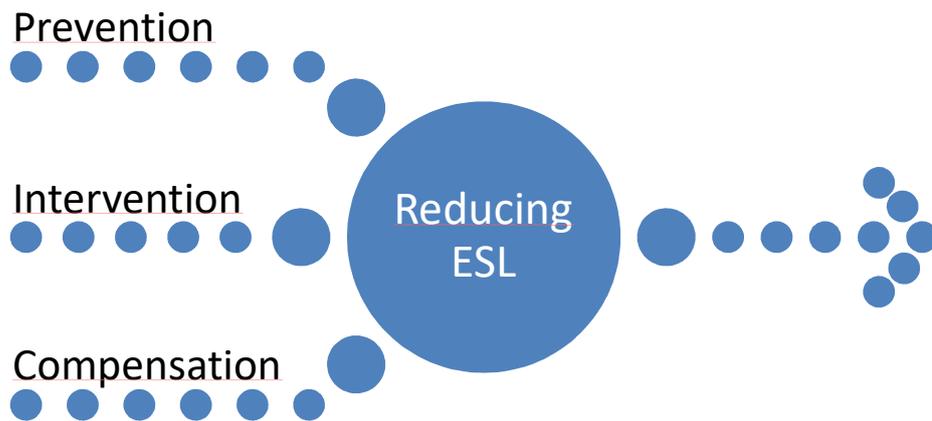
Question of language: the language of the good examples should be English. The needs analysis has to focus on the possible risks and disadvantages of using only English as a working language for the good practices.

Although the **ESL portal itself should reach several levels**, *we have to differentiate the task of setting up the portal and the task of collecting good examples*. Since policy papers, good examples are available at European level (see Chapter 3) these can be compiled and shared via the platform as a first stage of founding it, and can be disseminated as a first result to the future Association partners, members as well.

5. How to classify good practices?

Classification (i.e. identifying the collection criteria of good practices) is a strategic issue; wrong or too abstract criteria of data collection can damage the quality of the portal. In the above described survey of existing collections can well easily illustrate this threat.

- The most practical way is to *create categories* directly coming from the learning path of students at risk. However, both the learning paths and the positive interventions may differ a lot in the member states.
- The other option is to *follow the standard EU classification*, prevention, intervention and compensation:



In the three collection envelopes, we fill the following subtopics – using the three area of measures⁵:

Prevention⁶

- Improving access to and quality of ECEC (early childhood education and care)
- Reducing grade retention
- Desegregation policies at school level (besides that state, district level)
- Positive discrimination measures at school level (besides that state, district level)
- Developing extra-curricular activities
- Increasing flexibility and permeability of educational pathways
- Inclusion of ELET in initial teacher education and professional training
- Education and career guidance
- Improving curriculum according to the students' needs

Intervention

- Identification of groups at risk of ELET
- Absenteeism management
- Developing early warning systems for students at risk of ELET – at school level
- Providing individual support
- Support for low achievers
- Language support for students with a different mother tongue
- Specialist staff supporting teachers and students (cross-sectoral)
- Networking with parents and other actors outside school

Compensation

- Best second chance school organizations

⁵ See Eszter Szegedi's presentation at the kick-off meeting, completed by the partners' suggestions

⁶ You can see those on in grey which are less applicable at school level due to their systematic nature

- Improvement of the second chance education system
- Identification of undocumented early leavers and measures to help them re-enter education and training
- Validation (of non-formally acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes) – at school level, if possible

6. Needs analysis

The feedbacks of the partners strengthened the key role of teachers and core group around them, the school leaders, the service providers and the policy makers' inevitable role in tackling to ESL.

These target groups needs should be examined thoroughly with the help of an **online questionnaire and focus groups meetings**, discussions.

6.1. Online questionnaire

Expanzió prepares one online questionnaire in English with subquestions in accordance with the above-mentioned target groups:

- teachers, team of teachers and core groups from 'frontline'⁷ schools– min. 50 filled in questionnaire / country
- school leaders of 'frontline' schools – min. 20 filled in questionnaire / country
- Service providers – min. 20 filled in questionnaire / country

Policy makers are left out from the questionnaire consciously.

Language of the questionnaire / translation: the original version will be written in English and the partners decide whether translation is necessary since they have information on the target groups' language knowledge. If translation is needed, the partner prepares it until the given deadline and Expanzió will upload it.

Stakeholder list: compiling the stakeholder list is the responsibility of the partners / country. The partners have to present the relevant stakeholder list and upload it to Wikispace.

Sending: Sending out the questionnaires is the responsibility of the partners / country. The online questionnaire should be sent to the stakeholder lists / country covering all the named target groups. Those partners (NL, HU) who are from the same country decide the division of tasks among them.

In case of low number of filled in questionnaire until the given deadline, the partners have to resend it and reinforce their activity to achieve the given indicators.

Steps of analysing the answers: the questionnaires will be handled by Expanzió but the country analysis⁸ together with the short descriptions of the country context have to be provided by the partners. Expanzió will provide the raw data to the partners.

⁷ Frontline refers to those schools who tackle with ESL regularly

⁸ Template for the analysis will be provided later by Expanzió

Reporting: as a result of the discussions, memos should be written and each country has to provide a written summary in a given format, summarizing the main outcomes of the discussions. The template for reporting will be provided by Expanzio

6.2. Focus group discussions

Focus group research requires to **create three focus groups** (*minimum* 6 persons per group) in each participating country:

- a homogenous group **of teachers and core group** around them (where relevant) coming from schools where problem of ESL occurs due to the level of drop-out.
- a homogenous group of **school directors** coming from schools where problem of ESL is relevant due to the level of drop-out.
- and **service providers – with a mix of policy-makers** (regional or local) where relevant, depending on the country's ESL-tackling system.

Focus group members fill the online questionnaire beforehand and then ventilate their choices in a facilitated, informal discussion. As Expanzió will provide the raw data from the questionnaire, countries can prepare for the focus group meetings and will have a view on the target groups' needs.

These hypotheses have to be analysed, confirmed and completed according to the target groups' personal feedbacks.

The topics of the target group discussions:

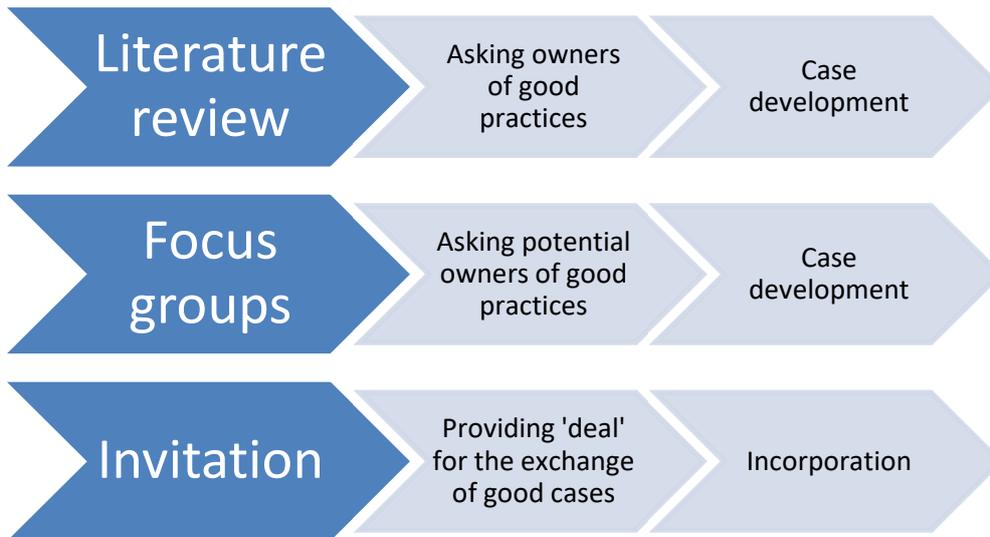
1. discussing the results of the questionnaire and validating its outcomes
2. identifying and collecting good practices, validate the template
3. expectations towards the future ESL association

Method and format: the focus groups discussions should be in the form of personal meetings, lengths of the discussion could be 1-3 hours / group. The method is simple: discussion with the target groups in line with the above mentioned topics, might be world café / group work per topics.

Reporting: as a result of the discussions, memos should be written and each country has to provide a written summary in a given format, summarizing the main outcomes of the discussions.

7. How to fill the portal up?

Most portals struggle with continuous development and sustainability. Our proposed portal part with the good examples can be filled up from three sources:



- **Literature review** means a systematic in-depth overview on the existing professional literature on (mostly) school-level good practices tackling ESL. This task belongs to the duties of Expanzio in the frame of WP2. According to the EU-related collections (see Chapter 3) *we probably could gain examples at national, systematic level* than school examples.
- **Online questionnaire** and **focus group research** will provide more direct hints to practical solutions, good practices. This task has to be done per country by the partners (in case of two partners / country, they can divide tasks and collaborate). The online questionnaire will be prepared in English by Expanzio, but the dissemination to the target groups is a shared tasks among the partners. Focus group research: each country has to provide a summary (English) of the focus group meetings, discussions' outcomes, conclusions. With the help of the needs questionnaire and the summaries, Expanzio will make a summary report in order to pin point (and to compare) the needs and proposals of the focus groups and to validate or reject (and reform) the hypothesis.
- The most creative way to find good practices is **invitation**: i.e. to target directly the practice owners and to make them interested in the exchange. In order to make them interested, the portal should provide them something tangible and useful.

For those professional practice owners who want to export their know-how, this portal can provide valuable **marketing services**. For instance, most member states are well aware that the practice of Danish production schools (as a second chance, compensatory action) is valuable but few of them are informed about the pedagogical and managerial practicalities of the school self. Consequently, our portal should be equipped with features which make us able to communicate with the end users.

Possible features of the portal:

- Searching for experts (with portfolio), guidance service
- Searching for partners, contacts
- Exchange teachers
- Contacts for job shadowing
- Exchange students
- Chat and socialising
- videoconference
- webinarium
- direct mail
- Forum for exchanging ideas, discuss topics regularly
- software and database
- infographics
- audio

The efficient use of invitation can provide us a competitive advantage, since most existing European portals don't use this technique of filling up.

8. Proposed division of tasks and timetable

TASK	DEADLINE	RESPONSIBLE
Sending the first version of questionnaire and template of good practices in English to the partners	8 April 2016	Tempus Public Foundation
uploading on wiki: number and target group type of stakeholders the partners would involve in the needs analysis (they will fill in the questionnaire); number and target group type of stakeholders of focus group discussions Partners' feedback on the questionnaire; Partners' feedback on good practice template	14 April 2016	Partners
Sending the final version of the questionnaire in English to the Partners	18 April 2016	Expansió
Translating and uploading the 'national' (translated) questionnaires on wiki	20 April 2016	Partners

TASK	DEADLINE	RESPONSIBLE
<p>Uploading the questionnaires on the website</p> <p>Sending a report template for focus group discussion including the suggested topics and expected results of the discussions.</p>	22 April 2016	Expanzió
Sending the link of the questionnaire to the stakeholders (starting the data collection);	22 April 2016	Partners
Uploading on wiki two good practices from all partners' country according to the template	6 May 2016	Partners
Finishing the data collection	10 May 2016	Partners
Sending the first results of the questionnaires. (It will be the main input for focus group discussions.)	13 May 2016	Expanzió
Arranging focus group discussions in every partners' country	17 – 23 May 2016	Partners
Uploading on wiki the draft country reports on the results of the questionnaire and on focus group discussions	24 May 2016	Partners
Partners' meeting	26-27 May 2016	Partners