

Summary on *Preventing dropout – research results symposium* held on 14th July, in Budapest

In the framework of [CroCooS – Cross-sectoral cooperation focused solutions for the prevention of early school leaving project](#) an international research symposium was held to share current research results and change ideas about the issue of early leaving from education and training (ELET) and a frame of an early warning system.

The meeting was organized by the Tempus Public Foundation in Budapest that is the Hungarian partner in the project responsible for management and research activities.

Participants and presentations

All together 25 people were present at the meeting from which 12 presented (one of them via skype). Experts arrived from Hungary, France, Belgium, and the Netherlands. Eszter Szegedi, head of Knowledge Management Department at the Tempus Public Foundation (TPF), professional leader in CROCOOS project, opened the meeting by raising awareness on the wider social consequences of early leaving from education and training and the responsibility of each actor to tackle this process. Krisztina Mihalyi, TPF, project manager in CROCOOS, continued with providing an insight into the project structure, its aims and partners with their relevant roles. Lastly from TPF side Judit Juhasz presented the preliminary results of a current empirical research conducted in Hungary among the teachers about their experiences of and attitudes towards ELET, furthermore the cooperation of cross-sectoral professionals. Besides Tempus Public Foundation, other Hungarian experts shared their results or connected knowledge. Mária Bognár from Equal Opportunities of Persons with Disabilities Non-profit Ltd. shared the idea of the upcoming pilot element of the project as she is the head of the piloting in CROCOOS project. Afterwards Catherine Perotin from France, project manager, University of Lyon introduced the cross-sectoral team- work in schools in the framework of a peer-project called TITA (Training, Innovative Tools and Actions). She put the focus on introducing the structure of their future website, the scientific database for professionals and also on multi-parenteral cooperation. Ward Nouwen researcher from Belgium, from the University of Antwerp showed some aspects and results of their Resl.EU project's school based qualitative research. Christopher Arnold from the UK, from Psychological Services GB presented via skype some results of the Safe Arrival Project that aims to have an effect on local level and already proven to lower dropout rate by 25-35%.

In the second half of the symposium system related issues were presented concerning early school leaving and dropout. Zoltán Hermann Hungarian expert from Institute of Economics, Centre for Economic and Regional Studies, Hungarian Academy of Sciences introduced the effect of changing compulsory school age on dropout level. A reduction from 18 to 16 happened recently however his

results were based on the previous change to the opposite direction: from 16 to 18, and has an effect on the 2007/2008-2008/2009 16 year-old cohort. Céline Daclin from France presented the work of second chance schools as a school headmaster and member of the E2C Europe Network. Connecting to the previous presenter, Huub Friederichs from the Netherlands, representative of IJzee Management Consultants introduced the Dutch school system and dropout explorer website, besides shared his ideas about the role of school leaders in the process of tackling dropout. This was followed by a qualitative research presentation by Eszter Berényi, researcher from Hungary, who shared some crucial opinions of school headmasters which reflects their vision on students at risk and the whole dropout problem. She showed examples for the instrumental and expressive logic of actions by quotes from interviews. Gabriella Kallai, researcher, Hungarian Institute for Educational Research and Development introduced the results of the evaluation of the Útravaló Bursary Programme and mentoring in school which as a strongest result strengthened the relationship of schools and parents. Finally Eszter Salamon, president of the European Parents Association showed some examples of empowerment and involvement of parents in the whole school process and shared research results on the effect of involvement.

Common points, shortage areas and further possibilities

During the whole symposium there were several topics that seemed to be crucial in the process of preventing dropout and taking steps towards equity in school. According to current research results teachers point out that parent's role is essential in the student's school career, however Eszter Salamon highlighted that, the sufficient involvement of parents highly depends on school. According to European data it is as well obvious that parents' educational attainment is determinant for the academic future of their children. Intergenerational poverty is, for instance, as well a highly determining factor that should be compensated or at least lowered by school.

Only a marginal part of research and project activities involve and influence students directly. This element is highly missing from the perspective of tackling this issue. The already gained personal interviews, surveys and experiences could be better exploited and upcoming projects are recommended to take steps toward the engagement and empowerment of the youth themselves in the process of lowering dropout rates while interventions may be reflect on their assumption on the problem. Student surveys on their opinion on leaving school early and about an ideal school for today is highly recommended.

Several possible connection points came up during the fruitful discussions and fascinating presentations. The CROCOOS project with its complexity has more than one possible activity that can be shared with or supported by other projects. The Resl.Eu project with its qualitative research in schools can add to the surveying in CROCOOS while the later results may be worth to compare. TITA has its website to serve as a scientific database which is highly similar to CROCOOS resource pool conception so that it is supposed to be taken into account.

Besides these concrete connection possibilities all presented project results can add to the conception of the upcoming pilot: who are the key actors in the process? how can we approach them the best? what are the main steps of a successful parent involvement? how can intersectoral cooperation be strengthened? how can we monitor and measure our activities the best? what is the exact role of school leaders in the process?