Developing an institutional Early Warning System (EWS) for preventing and reducing dropout from school

The Guidelines was prepared within the framework of the *Cross-sectoral focused solutions for preventing early school leaving* (CroCooS) project

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Content

Nature and aim of this document

The Guidelines for developing an **institutional early warning system (EWS)** is intended to help the work of schools who are about to build an early warning system for preventing and reducing dropout in their institution.

Within the framework of the CroCooS project it is a supporting document for the mentors who are assisting the institutional development in the pilot schools aiming at setting up a sustainable system for preventing early school leaving and reducing dropout rates in secondary level schools

Parts of the Guidelines and linking project products:

The Guidelines covers the recommended principals and the process of building an EWS on an institutional level:

−   It presents the definition of EWS at institutional level and the philosophy behind the recommended actions;

−   Lists the main steps and core elements of building an EWS;

−   Describes the cycle of an institutional development process that is recommended for building an EWS;

−   Connects practical support elements (called *tools*) and give reference to theoretical background materials (called elements of the Resource Pool) to each of the steps of the EWS building process.

The Guidelines is available in English, Serbian, Slovenian and Hungarian. The Guidelines is supported by a Toolkit and the Resource Pool available online and are linked to each other by tagging. For the list of key words used for the tagging please refer to Chapter 3 of this document.

1 Introduction

1.1 How we understand the early warning system at institutional level

Definition

In the framework of the CroCooS project Early Warning System (EWS) is a tool used by educational institutions, **based on measurable data** and **observable phenomena**, facilitating the **timely identification of students at risk** of dropping out and also the **establishment and application of prevention measures** on an individual level.

Principles of building an EWS in the school

Building a comprehensive early warning system at institutional level is **a long-term process.** It may take up to 3 years to be completed.

The **intervention activities** take place on different levels in the institution. There are activities on

- school level

- groups (students-at-risk, members of staff etc.)

- the individual (intervention which are built around the student taking into account his/her needs.

It is recommended to operate an early warning system from a very early age preferably already on pre-primary level, but at least from lower secondary. Within the framework of the CroCooS project the consortium decided to focus the policy experimentation on upper-secondary level. Therefore the early warning system to be developed within the project will concentrate on the upper secondary schools but the principals described in the project materials can mostly be adapted to other levels of the education.

1.2 The main steps and core content of development of an EWS

Building an EWS is a complex process starting with the evolution of the commitment to prevent and reduce dropout in the institution followed by designing an operating system. The process is based on building a **strategy** which includes the main aims, selecting the responsible teams (e.g. EWS team) and other cooperating actors, the analysis of the current situation, as well as the milestones to be achieved. A coherent **implementation/action plan** is also an integral part of the process in which the main steps and the deadlines are laid

down, and there are identified needs and resources, including the strengths of the staff and the necessary capacity building.

The main elements which are indispensable from a comprehensive EWS:

- **Establishing an EWS strategy and action plan in the school**
  - o Identifying the needs and resources: what is necessary to reach the
- **Improving the schools' data gathering and data processing capacity**
- **Setting up a system of monitoring distress signals**
- **Identifying student at risk of drop out**
- **Planning adequate intervention**
- **Intervention based on personal development plan (PDP)**
- **Improving partnerships inside and outside of the school**

1.3 Expected results of using the CroCooS projects' EWS building methodology

In line with the above described principles and taking into consideration the length of the piloted period within the project (18 months) the following expectations were formulated towards the schools by the partners of the project.

I. The school has a solid and sustainable EWS/ESL prevention strategy.
   a) The school maps out external partners and resources and is able to mobilize them if any of the students is in need of help.
   b) The school operates and institutional tracking/monitoring system.
   c) The school identifies its capacity building needs in relation to instruction and pedagogical evaluation.

II. The activities of the school in relation to EWS have an impact on the relationship of the school community including the internal and external partners (e.g. student-teacher, teacher-teacher, student-school, school-family and school-local actors and stakeholders relationships).

III. School operates a system of individual supplementary support for the students.

IV. The school actively strives to solve students' problems.

V. Teachers teaching the same students actively cooperate to solve the problem of the students.

VI. Risen awareness of drop-out among teachers, school leaders, students.

2 Steps of institutional capacity building: the plan-do-check-act (PDCA) cycle

The development of the EWS is recommended to be looked at as a project (starting and ending at a given time), but the maintenance of the system is a process in order to make it sustainable. It means that the process of its operations should be overseen and monitored, the results must be analysed (what works and what does not), changed if needed and checked again when there are information on the results of the introduced improvements. The quality assured operations therefore should be cyclic and actions are recommended to be arranged in a plan-do-check-act (PDCA) cycle (Figure 1).

Figure 1: The plan-do-check-act cycle (PDCA)
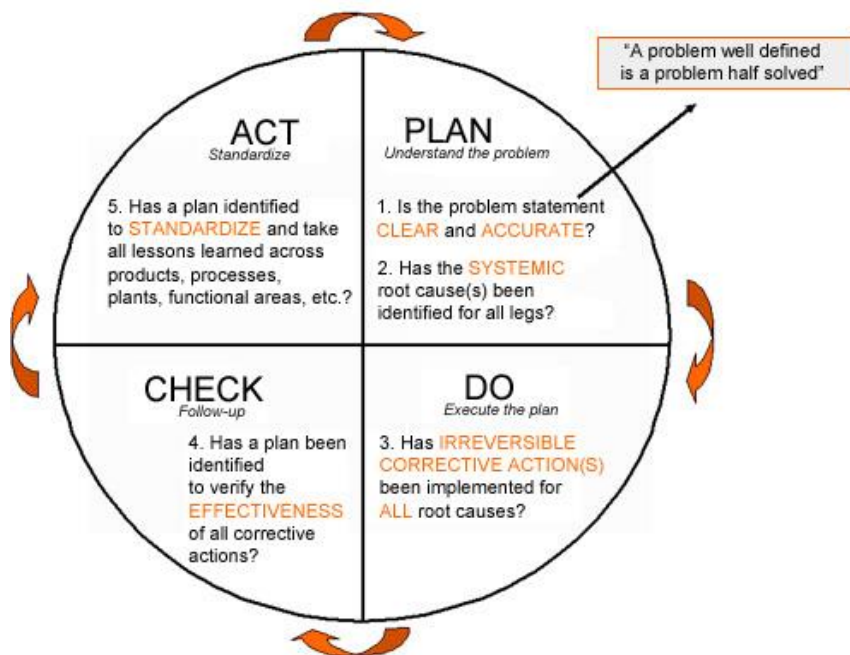
Source: NHS Improving Quality, 2014

In the following sections the steps of developing the system is described in a PDCA logic. The cyclic development is spiral that it to say that all steps are started and revisited during the project and developments are actualized. It is suggested that mentors or the responsible person for change management encourage schools to learn the cyclic process. Institutions – within the project period - should not complete fully one step after the other (first planning until it is perfect and then moving on to doing etc.) because it is very time consuming (and time is limited within the project period) and it is also demotivating.

The steps are arranged along sets of questions which the school will have to raise to themselves. The aim is not to provide answer to those questions but to offer ways of finding the answers.

Practice has shown that cycle does not have to be started necessarily with planning. Teachers may want to start with using or piloting intervention tools and not fiddle with data gathering. There is no problem with this approach. The EWS can be built as a house, from the basement to the roof but it also could be developed as a jigsaw puzzle by trying to find little pieces that fit together. But just as with the puzzle the school management has to have a vision and find the little pieces along that. In any approach the aim is to build a system and have it operational in a given time. The system has the elements discussed above and the cyclic operational method – the "how" is up to the schools. We are showing the classic project type approach below but by no means is it the only way.

2.1 Change management in the institution

The process of developing an EWS system is a change management action. The steps described below follow a PDCA logic.

As it has been mentioned system building is mostly arranged along questions which have to be answered by the individual schools.

The process is seen below and we will discuss each section along these lines.

- Goal setting.

- Situation analysis

- Action plan

- Intervention

- Evaluation of the actions taken

- Corrections, improvements

We are discussing the EWS system development on a school level but there is an alternative solution as teachers understandably often does not like to build systems but rather work with students. In this case teachers may try to work with students on the intervention level and collect information, do plans and evaluations on the individual level. In this case the system builds bottom-up and the school will have a system following two-three years of experimentation as a summary of experiences. In the following we are providing alternative questions for each step to suggest that there is no one way to build a system.

2.2 Goal setting

- Is there an early school leaving / drop out problem in our school?

- ▪ Is the student in danger of dropping out?
  - – Do we want to do anything?
    - ▪ Do I want to intrude or do anything?
  - – What is our philosophy of schooling?
    - ▪ What is my pedagogical credo?
  - – What is our long term aim regarding early school leaving or drop out?
    - ▪ What do I want to achieve with this student?

Without setting goals the aspects of analysis are unclear or may be unrelated to what the organization wants to achieve. The present situation and the conditions should not influence the goals. Any goals could be set even the most unrealistic ones - from then on the question is not if the goals could be reached or not. The issue is WHEN the goals will be achieved.

Just before starting to work on the EWS (or on any development project) step zero is the decision of the leader of the organization if the problem needs addressing. In order to answer this question the head of school may go on and decide for him/herself but it is a much better way to have other colleagues involved. In the CroCoos project we advise school heads to form an EWS team.

As for students we also have to have a goal to achieve, a direction to head for. Goals are responses to challenges rather than solutions to problems and teachers should think this positive way.

2.2.1 Is there an early school leaving / drop out problem in our school?

The first question the school leadership should ask itself if there is drop out and/or early school leaving is a problem for the school. This seems to be an easy one but in fact there is almost always some amount of early school leaving in all schools. While every child or young adult is important and even one student dropping out is a problem personally but on a systemic level with limited resources it has to be decided when, at what level should a school start an EWS. It is a rule of thumb that 100% efficiency is theoretical in every system. It is also well known that beyond a certain level any quality development costs way more than it yields. The school leadership must decide if they see drop out phenomenon and/or early school leaving to be a problem that has to be treated.

First of all we have to identify the problem. Many schools have exact data on the number of students who dropped out and also when did they stopped going to school. But in many cases the numbers are not available and most importantly not for years. One number is no number - that is a rule of thumb for all statistically related analysis. The scope of the drop out problem can only be assessed by looking at trends. If, for example, the trend is that we

have a decreasing number of drop out students then we have to look for what has changed in the past years or what is that we have done well and we should continue. But if the numbers are getting worse we should look at the situation from another angle.

In case the school does not have data on the drop out or early school leaving situation data collection and processing has to be designed.

On student level the teacher should have information that a student may consider leaving school, i.e. identify the danger of ESL. Or in other words: Do we have a problem here?

2.2.2 Do we want to do anything?

The next thing that has to be done is to make a decision if the school leadership wants to do anything with the problem situation. This is not easy. In some cases schools may have several other problems which could be more important or urgent to solve. It is not unprofessional for a school leader to identify the problem and to decide not working on developing an EWS.

But in case the school leadership decides to do something the decision must be taken seriously. A leadership decision is serious when it represents commitment to the decision. An institutional commitment must be visible and documented. Therefore it is

- Written, signed and made public in the school for teachers and other stakeholders;
- It has to be explained to the school staff, teachers and students;
- It should to be repeatedly announced and developments reported to the stakeholders.
- School leadership should ask for feedback from stakeholders in order to reinforce its commitment.

On the student level the teacher has to decide if any intervention is needed. ESL is not a tragedy in itself and may not ruin the life of a young person. A happily taken pregnancy may not suit the value system of a teacher but could be a solution to life crisis to a student. A temporary leave from school may not be the end of life and career. As one dropout student worded: "I would suggest to leave school if there is a very good reason to it. But if it is just because you don't know what to do - don't drop out!"

2.2.3 What is our philosophy of schooling?

Most schools have some kind of a motto or mission statement that summarizes the educational philosophy of the school. This, however, may be misleading. Schools many times write their philosophy and later abandon it as it has been "done". If one asks the philosophy

of the school from teachers or other staff members many times the answers are divergent because school philosophy has to be taken care of, nurtured, and revisited.

When the school leadership wishes to determine the philosophy of the school that means to create a common value system which is or could be shared by the decisive majority of the school staff. The shared value system is a solid basis for setting goals.

Establishing a shared value system is not a verbal exercise but it can only be coined through constant discourse among the staff members. Values should be identified and interpreted in everyday situations.

It may be the case that the leadership finds out that the values of the teaching staff is extremely divergent and it is not in line with the decision made by the school leaders to reduce dropout rates or early school leaving. It could be the case that school staff is not motivated and does not share the concern of the leaders about endangered students and thinks that they are responsible for their own faith and giving them priority is unfair towards those students who really want to learn. In this case the school leadership should work out a strategy for value changes and has to count with much longer period for introducing EWS.

If a school builds the system from the student the teachers have to ask themselves about their philosophy as well. Do they really care for students or it is just a lip service? Do they think it is the student's responsibility if they drop out or do they have a role in it? Blaming is not an adequate attitude for developing an EWS.

2.2.4 What is our long term aim regarding early school leaving or drop out?

The long term or strategic aim serves as a reference and is based on the shared values and the decision that the school wants to do something. The aim has to be as specific as strategic thinking allows it to be. In any case it has to have

- A time frame
- A measurable dimension
- Possibly the positioning of the school in the future (benchmarking)

Therefore we think that a weak strategic aim lacks these and may sound like this: "Our intention is that in the future we will reduce dropout rate in the school as much as possible."

The problem with this aim is that what do we ask ourselves next year?

- We do not know if we still have time to improve or should we have finished already?
- Dropout rate is down by 0,1%. Are we doing well?
- Is this the maximum we can achieve (or the next door school is doing twice as well as we do)?

And finally: And now what?

A well fabricated strategic aim looks something like this: "In five years we will reduce dropout rate in our school so that it will be the best in the county." Would a school have a similarly written aim it could well answer the questions above - with special regards to the "And now what?"

The resulting response to the reflective question of "And now what?" could be twofold: either to revisit and refine the strategic aim, or to introduce changes or new actions in planning the future. Either could work.

As for the students the real question is whom do teachers consider to be a dropout? Is it everybody who leaves the school or only those who drop out from the educational system without qualification? The teacher may have an aim to keep an eye on the student and follow his/her path and offer alternatives to come back to school again or follow a career that does not need formal training or help to continue studies in another school.

2.3 Situation analysis

- Scope of the problem – how big is it?

- Do we have information about the causes? Is there a pattern for causes of early school leaving or drop out?

- What have we done so far? What worked and what didn't?

- Resource analysis

  - HR – What personal competencies do we have?

  - OD – What organizational competencies do we have?

  - How much staff time do we have?

  - Do we have methodology?

  - Do we have equipment/space?

  - Do we have an external expert network?

The analysis of the situation comes after the goal setting as now we know what do we want to achieve. In order to bridge the gap between the desired future and the present situation by a plan we must know where are we now compared to the wishful future.

2.3.1   Scope of the problem – how big is it?

Data and numbers do not speak for themselves. They have to be converted into information (data has to be interpreted). The interpretation comes from grouping data and finding relationships among them. This means that we will not be able to do any planning if we only

have the number of drop outs or early leavers. We will have to find patterns like, e.g. do they drop out early or at the end of the year etc...

The EWS's main purpose is to offer a systemic approach to identify students who are potentially in danger of dropping out from school. There are several signs of this danger as there are countless reasons for dropping out, these are all different by every individual. Nevertheless, the most common signs can be monitored and the use of this monitoring may help to identify groups of students in danger.

For the purpose of CroCooS we mapped the most typical distress signals that could be used and screens for identifying potential drop out students. The six distress signals which were introduced in the chapter 1.2.2 based on the study of international practices offer a framework for data collection on individual students.

The presence of one distress signal is most probably not enough to say that this or that student is a potential drop out. For example, increasing number of classes missed (absenteeism) without all the other signals may not be a sign but may come from e.g. a sports injury. We strongly believe that at least 3 signals must be strongly seen to say that personal intervention is needed.

The six distress signals we advise to monitor at least are the following:

I. Signals connected to official standards

    1. Absenteeism

    2. Decreasing achievement

    3. School year repetition (*note: depends on the system of each country*)

II. Signals connected to behaviour

    4. Being bored in the classroom (low motivation)

    5. Drastic behavioural changes (aggression, introversion, rhapsodic behaviour)

    6. Bullying (both sides)

Signals in group I. are more quantitative, in group II. are more qualitative in nature. The Toolkit provides suggested tools for all signals. It is particularly advisable for large schools to build a database maintained regularly to keep track of students and help the identification of students at risk. Smaller institutions may solve the tracking of students with staff meetings and less statistics.

It has to be emphasized that screening is not a one shot event but a process. If the school screens the students only in the first grade of high school (mostly 9th grade) it is not possible to see a trend in their achievements.

We see screening as a process where students in danger may show distress signals at different times and not at once. When the number of distress signals reach the critical

number (say 3) in the middle of the school year the EWS should ring the alarm and action, intervention should be taken as soon as possible and as long as it is needed.

Besides the main 6 distress signals there may be several others which the school may consider monitoring. Here is a list of possible other signals which are by no means comprehensive:

- Pregnancy
- Constant lying
- Signs of physical abuse
- Alcohol/drug use in school
- Frequent change of school
- Change in physical appearance
- Peer relation problems
- Physical/mental illness
- Learning difficulties

2.3.2 Do we have information about the causes? Is there a pattern for causes of early school leaving or drop out?

It is important to emphasize that data and information do not tell us the causes. Typically the correlation between two data means that they go together: if one is present or growing it is probable that the other will do so. But this does not mean that one is the cause of another. The distress signals are signals and not causes. Just to mention one thing: decreasing achievement may have innumerable causes from a broken relationship to decreasing vision or from family crisis to learning problems or personal conflicts with a new teacher.

The causes always make up a different set and differ by individuals. There could be, however, patterns of causes which should be identified. Just to mention a few: boredom in class may be connected to a subject or a teacher or a day in the week. Bullying may be related to a few classes or year. Absenteeism may be more frequent in certain months of the year.

2.3.3 What have we done so far? What worked and what didn't?

It is very important to prepare an inventory of the actions taken regarding the drop out situation. The school has to have an educated guess so that teachers can decide on what to continue doing and what should they stop practicing.

The identification of successful and less successful activities is inevitable and the integral part of the analysis of the present situation.

2.3.4 Resource analysis

The resource analysis is advised to be done during the situation analysis but should be revisited time to time because the action plan to be produced may change the resource needs and the lack or abundance of resources may affect the goals set by the school.

Nevertheless, the resources are always there. Its use is, at least to some extent, dependent on the priorities and the decisions of the school leadership.

Resources can be grouped to human, physical and financial resources. The school is in a special situation where most resources are strictly regulated by the legal environment and the maintainer. This means that schools have to use the resources that they already have.

The human resources inventory includes the capacities (time), skills and attitudes of staff. We are talking about "staff" because it is not only the teacher who may be involved in operating the EWS. The school leadership has to make a decision how much staff time it will allocate for developing or operating the EWS. It will also have to make an inventory of the organizational and personal competencies already available and still missing and may plan to incorporate external resources (experts, volunteers, institutional partners).

In order to support schools with further methods the CroCooS Toolkit has been developed. The Toolkit provided for the EWS intends to help the school and the staff to develop their competencies.

The physical environment in school is a given condition most of the time. The EWS generally does not have an extensive space or equipment requirement but the EWS team needs a place to meet, also a suitable space for making individual and group interviews, meeting with external experts and parents. It is better if such a space is less formal and more comfortable than a huge classroom. It also has to have computer capacity where student data can be stored and is safe from a data protection point of view.

We suggest preparing a list of potential external resources to be used in either phase of developing or operating the EWS. The list may include individuals or organizations but if organizations are listed it is advisable to have a list of contact persons as well. The aim is to make the EWS as effective as possible by using external and internal resources in a healthy balance.

Actually on student level similar or he same questions can be asked and activities could be arranged along the same lines. They say that this is in my head anyway why should I spend time to write it. In fact the analysis is not just for one teacher but for a team and its members are sometimes from outside of school. They may share information not known for teachers and they can get information from teachers they are not aware of. Generally saying

nothing should be written that is known by everybody but everything should be noted that may not be known by an interested party.

The resource analysis is particularly important. Does the teacher have all the necessary competencies? But only after a situational analysis can a teacher talk to a psychologist for that matter. The teacher needs to ask concrete questions and professional help not only putting forward a question: what can I do with this student? Or even worst, ask the psychologist to „fix the kid".

2.4 Action plan

− What are our short term goals that suits the school's strategy?

− What actions are to be taken?

− What resources are needed? What do we have and what needs to be developed / acquired?

− What is the logical arrangement of actions (sequence, interconnections)?

− What timeframe would work for us?

− Who are responsible and who participates in each actions?

Action plans are used in the educational arena as well. In the development phase these short term plans are used to introduce new activities and establish new routines in schools. Action plans are for establishing EWS. In this respect the basic requirements for preparing an action plan that they have to follow the questions above. First of all the plan has to be in line with the strategy decided in the goal setting phase. It is best to make plans in a chart format which

− Should contain a measurable goal

  o Therefore success criteria

  o Well detailed tasks and

  o Timescale

− Deadline

− Assigned responsibility

− List of staff who will be actively involved

− Leadership consent (time and equipment is provided)

In operating the EWS action plans are also needed but are usually not named "action plans" on a student level. These will be individual development plans or contracts with students but

the logic is similar. During the operational phase of EWS on school level further developments and improvements require action plans as well.

On a student level the PDP or the personal development plan is following a similar logic. Plans are not only sacrifices on the altar of bureaucracy, once written and then forgotten. Plans are to be followed, modified if needed and when successfully completed a bottle of champagne must be opened. This is half joke. Students must know the plan, they have to agree and work on it. Personal development is a joint effort by student and teacher and sometimes by other actors (sports coach, psychologist, a friend etc.). If one party is not committed the other cannot be successful. Preventing ESL is NOT saving students. It needs commitment and hard work from both sides and plans are to create a contract for reaching a jointly wanted aim.

2.5 Intervention

- On school level by the leadership

- On EWS team level

- On teacher level

- On student

Intervention means the actions aiming to help potential drop out students. Since we have identified at least three distress signals at each student in danger for ESL (which may be three different ones) it is very unlikely that we will find a one-size-fits all solution. It is also a rule of thumb that one signal or phenomenon does not have only one cause. Each intervention for each student must be tailored to the individual.

Interventions are not focused only on students. Many times the causes lay with teachers or group of teachers, their methodology or philosophy, or sometimes school level structural inadequacies.

2.5.1 On school level by the leadership

If and when a cause or a group of causes are on a school level and are structural these can usually be treated by simple actions. If, for example, many classes are missed by a group of students who live in another settlement and the missed classes are mostly the first ones in the morning the team may find that bus schedules do not match the school's and students could arrive either way too early or miss the first hour of school. It is one way to treat the problem to convince students to get up an hour earlier and spend another hour in the school hall before classes start but for those who have ever tried it sounds to be a mission impossible. School level action may be

- To negotiate the bus transport company to change the schedule or

- Start school (first class) earlier or

- Start first class later (to fit bus schedule) or

- Offer students an activity before the first class that appeals to them and is motivating.

- Any other idea?

The morale of the story is that sometimes schools should align their operations to the students and it may help sorting out problem situations.

Similar issue is the question of "behavioural problems" stemming from breaking the house rules in schools. It is obvious that the more rules we have statistically the more deviations will occur. Less rules – less opportunity to break them. Annually overseeing the house rules should be a must for all schools. Rules must be in line with the values of the school. When revisiting the rules we find something that has no relevance to our commonly accepted and shared values it should be thrown out. A school should have a few but strictly enforced rules to make everybody's life easier.

The next level of intervention is the staff level. Again, we are speaking about staff and not only teachers. Clerical staff, technical workers, cleaning staff etc. are in touch with students and their behaviour is effecting students as well. They have to understand this responsibility and also identify themselves with the shared values of the school.

2.5.2   On EWS team level

EWS team is a permanent team responsible for running the EWS system in the school. This team is working on all the levels of the intervention.

Tasks of this team are:

- Handle and keep up to date the data collection;

- Interpret the data;

- Help goal setting at school level against dropping out

- Plays leading role in delivering, revising and improving the school level action plan

- Keep studying the situation of distress signals;

- Pay attention when a student has 3 distress signals;

- Reveal the causes of distress signals;

- Initiate and organize the intervention of at risk students;

- Organizing and managing the supporting network of the student;

- When the cause is related with a teacher or a class try to handle the teachers;

– Cooperate with and support the case managers;

– Organize the temporary development team to work with one student at risk;

– Organize and lead case discussions;

– Care for the personal development plans;

– Mentoring teachers in intervention process;

– Collect, build and maintain relationship with external experts, organizations in favour of the students.

An important school level action is to create a network of partners and actually a pool of outside resources. There are several organizations and authorities who are in touch or should be in touch with the young people who are at risk or their family or social environment. The relevant authorities are usually organized in the government way, departmentally where each "department" (authority) has its own scope of tasks and these are exclusive. Even if everything works well due to the departmental organizational system a constant coordination is needed among social, welfare, health, educational, non-governmental organizations and the coordination task is not always clear.

It is not the task of the EWS team to solve governmental organizational development problems but the school which is mostly in contact with students may take the guardian role and be responsible for the individual. If the school takes the effort to identify students at risk then it could facilitate a network of professionals at various organizations *around* the student and jointly make complex efforts to support him/her until it is needed. A teacher, a psychologist, a welfare system official and a family therapist together, communicating with each other may have a way better result than departments working hard side by side.

The action taken on a staff level may be planned when the search for causes reveals that some distress signals are related to one or more teachers, subjects. It is obviously the responsibility of the teacher when one third of a class fails in mathematics. The teacher may argue that the students are coming with a weak knowledge from elementary school and know nothing, plus they are unmotivated and arrogant. But failing them would help any of the above? Class retention would make them more knowledgeable in maths or will they be more motivated? Would this change the attitude of the students and will they be more polite and humble? And here comes the next riddle: "Now what?" On staff level all sensible and professional discourse to solve a problem starts with this simple question.

2.5.3   On teacher level

There is obviously no single and simple answer to the question of "Now what?" and neither there is a "quick-n-fast" solution. Staff meetings in subject groups (mathematics teachers) and class teachers (colleagues who teach the same class) may reveal successful methods or

behaviours (What works for me with these kids?). Such meetings are not easy to call and to manage. It has to be facilitated by one of the EWS team members who understands that for a teacher whose students are failing in mathematics it is extremely difficult not to blame them and ask the question: Now what? It sends a message that the teacher is no able to solve a teaching problem - well, this is the case actually but still it is very hard to acknowledge this in front of other teachers. Therefore the facilitator's task is to explain the situation with no judgments and ask the other teachers what works for them with that particular group of students or what works for them in teaching mathematics. They should talk about their own experiences. The school leadership has the responsibility that *something* is planned and is happening because things cannot go the way they are now.

It may be clear from the above that from a systemic point of view *teacher level* is actually the *student level* as well. Student level is always individual, however we can describe the main steps of an individual development process

2.5.4   On student level

What can we do after declaring that a student is at risk of dropping out? Since the causes of being at risk in each case are unique, the intervention also must be person – centred. An **individual development process** is proposed to carry out. The centre of this process is always the student with his/her needs and strengths. It is never effective to focus on weaknesses or problems in personal development.

Students will cooperate only with persons whom they trust. First it is needed to find the trust person in the school who will be the case manager. It is not sure that trust person is the form master but the person from the school stuff with whom the student has had a confidential relationship previously. The case manager organizes the temporary **development team**, the members of which are persons who might be potential supporters from the point of view of the student. They could be parents, relatives, teachers, school-psychologist, class-mates, experts from out of the school, child-protection officer, family supporter, addiction doctor, etc. The development team is responsible to carry out the individual development process of one student. Members work together until they achieve the goals defined in the **Personal Development Plan (PDP).**

The compilation of the PDP is a team discussion, where all the persons involved into the development process of the student and/or into the problem actually raised with the student are present. The Personal Development Plan is the documentation of the personal development process. It is essential for personality development that the student can perform activities adequate for his/her actual personal developmental stage at school that is the external effects will reach him/her at the appropriate developmental level..

Personal development is an activity, in the course of which we intervene in the development process of the youngster tailored to his/her own characteristic and actual developmental process.

The basis of the consistent development is the PDP, periodically evaluated and redesigned by the development team.

The key steps of the compilation of the Personal Development Plan:

1. Getting to know the student in complexity – data collection and observations by teachers, family members, classmates, etc.

2. Goal setting – long term and short term goals;

3. Defining the possible ways of help with time frame and responsible persons indicated - What actions are to be taken? What resources are needed? What do we have and what needs to be developed / acquired?

4. Evaluation of the previous period – What we have achieved and what not? What worked and what did not? Is there a need for adjustment (goals, activities, process, staffing, timing)? What should we modify?

5. Start again the process from step 1.

Depending on the duration of the development process development team needs to evaluate and redesign the PDP periodically. Planning the evaluation of the help and the development as a process, and sharing, rethinking it with the student and the parents is essential, because this way the student will become a responsible participant of his/her own learning and developmental process. Drafting, summarizing, taking notes, and finally signing the document containing the fields to be developed can make the student be aware of the process.

During the personal development process the case manager/trust person builds and keeps a **helping relationship** with the student. Helping discussions are warmly recommended week by week. The helping relationship and the development process are controlled and supported by regular **case discussions** with the participation of the development team members. Purpose of a case discussion: reviewing, together with the team members, the problems related to the planning procedure of the supporting activity and case management, and also that the team could contribute to the interpretation of the personal feelings of the case-deliverer and facilitate a creative solution to the problem.

Teachers like to start from this step in building an EWS and there is no problem with this. But still, this step has to be formalized even on a very limited level so that it does not remain a secluded experience but becomes a brick in building the system.

2.6 Evaluation of the actions taken

− Have we achieved the action plan goals in time?

− What worked and what did not?

− Is there a need for adjustment (goals, activities, process, staffing, timing)?

− Is there a need to adjust anything in the school strategy?

Setting goals and planning worth nothing if there is no follow up evaluation of the interventions performed. The system operates in the desirable cyclic manner if a systematic checking of achievements is introduced.

The results must be measured along the success criteria hammered out in action plans. If the goals are well worded the results can be measured or observed in one way or another. The evaluation of actions should be done by the actions reported to be finished or at the deadlines at the latest.

We suggest, however, to take a look at how things are going during the action plan period as well. This is to ensure that possible failures or inadequacies may be detected as early as possible and not at the end only.

Would the EWS team find that the actions taken along the plan are not yielding the results expected or it seems that achieving the desired goals would take more time the plans should be adjusted? It is possible to change the goals, the tasks, the scope or quantity of resources and even the responsible leader or the deadline during the intervention. This is wise planning and not failure. Failure is if we find out that goals were not achieved *after* the deadline.

On students level the key question to ask is „what worked and what did not?" This has to be answered by the team who is working with the student because teachers and other experts have their own way of dealing with students and finding good solutions are often like gold digging - a lot of seemingly useless work is involved before finding something precious. Evaluation by the team is to find out what has to be adjusted and what has to be followed in the future. By no means should it be judgmental to either.

2.7 Corrections, improvements

− Is there a need to change anything in the philosophy or the strategy of the school?

− Do we still have the aims or should we revise them?

− Has the situation changed re early school leaving or drop out?

− Is there a plan to preserve the strengths and eliminate the weaknesses of the EWS?

− Are the actions to improve are taken and reports have been made?

– Are we ready to go to the do part again?

The systemic operation of an EWS needs periodic revision. In any case the evaluation of the system should involve the complete overseeing of the activities since the last revision or the start.

We should revisit the institutional level by looking at the aims and philosophy, shared values of the school. Generally speaking it is not healthy to change long term strategic aims, philosophy or values annually in an organization but schooling being extremely subject to political changes this may be necessary. It is, however, advised to adjust and not fully change strategic thinking because it provides the feeling of safety to staff and students.

We emphasize it again that adjustments are better than abrupt changes. Even if something does not work well the changes should be done by implementing a sequence of adjustments rather than throwing out completely what has been done so far and introduce something different (which may also be unsuccessful).

Most importantly at the end of each intervention a reflection is needed. In the reflective phase the EWS team should oversee what was done well and effectively and what should be done differently *next time*. Evaluation should always point into the future as sentences that contain *what should have been done* start a bad communication cycle which tends to find scapegoats and leads the staff to blame each other by trying to find out *whose fault was it*. We cannot change the past but we can plan our actions to be taken in the future.

By finishing the cycle with a full reflection on the EWS and its details a new and improved cycle could start. This provides the sustainability of the system introduced.

This is a step where the work of teachers with students may rise to an institutional level. If a teacher has success with a student and it seems to be applicable for others then it is not only an opportunity but an obligation for a school leader to institutionalize the good practice.

3 Connecting the Guidelines, the Toolkit and the Resource Pool: list of key words used for tagging

The Guidelines, the supporting Toolkit and the Resource Pool is available on http://oktataskepzes.tka.hu/en/crocoos following a simple registration.

The content of the Guidelines, the Toolkit and the Resource Pool are linked to each other by thematic tagging. Below is the list of key words used for connecting the elements of the mentioned supporting items.

As it is described in the introduction the Guidelines is devoted to giving a framework support for building an early warning system on institutional level.

The Resource Pool is an online, systemized collection of theoretical background materials including research reports, strategic documents, studies, abstracts of studies etc.

The Toolkit is an online collection of practical help that maybe applied in the school. The Toolkit integrates an online community where the experiences of using the elements of the toolkit can be shared with each other, feedback to and support from the developers can be provided/demanded. The Toolkit will be continuously enriched according to schools, EWS teams further needs and also build upon the project partners good practical solutions. Below you can find the "starting" Toolkit elements as they relates to the subchapters and also the connected tags.

English language thematic tags are:

absenteeism	effective communication	parents
accepting others' opinion	EU policy	protocol
bullying	getting to know students	school leader level
classroom management	grade repetition	situation analysis
cooperation in school	individual development	social context of ESL
cross-sectoral cooperation	institutional level	student at risk
data collection	intervention	student with low achievement
distress signals	low motivation	students behaviour
dropout	mentoring	teacher / team level
early warning system	non-violent communication	trusting relationship

TOOLKIT						
Building rapport	intervention	individual development	trusting relationship			
Bullying	bullying	distress signals	data collection	teacher / team level	classroom management	
Communication basics - Teacher mentoring student	teacher / team level	mentoring	trusting relationship	intervention		
Cooperating partners in supporting and keeping at risk students	school leader level	institutional level	cross-sectoral cooperation	situation analysis		
Creating a classroom code of conduct	teacher / team level	classroom management	intervention			
Cross sectoral cooperation mapping up partnerships building cooperation	school leader level	institutional level	cross-sectoral cooperation			
Effective communication	teacher / team level	intervention	cooperation in school	effective communication	classroom management	
Following absenteeism	absenteeism	data collection	distress signals	teacher / team level		
Getting to know the student in a complex way	data collection	intervention	teacher / team level	individual development	parents	getting to know students
Helping discussion	intervention	individual development	teacher / team level	trusting relationship	getting to know students	
How to raise students interest	teacher / team level	intervention	low motivation			
IAM-Tool for effective and efficient cooperation	teacher / team level	effective communication	cooperation in school			
Make one step forward group exercise	teacher / team level	trusting relationship	classroom management	intervention		
Managing team meetings	teacher / team level	school leader level	cooperation in school			
No lose conflict solving	non-violent communication	intervention	teacher / team level	accepting others' opinion		
Non-judgemental behaviour	non-violent communication	intervention	teacher / team level	individual development	accepting others' opinion	
Partners' roundtable	cross-sectoral	cooperation in	intervention	institutional	school leader	

	cooperation	school		level	level	
Person centred profile	teacher / team level	intervention	individual development	situation analysis	getting to know students	
Points of view	situation analysis	distress signals	student at risk	intervention		
Selecting team members	institutional level	school leader level	cooperation in school	school leader level		
Setting up a PDP	intervention	individual development	teacher / team level	student at risk	getting to know students	
Steps of the case discussion	teacher / team level	cooperation in school	intervention	individual development		
Storytelling	intervention	distress signals	dropout	individual development	getting to know students	
The actors elements and system of students support	institutional level	school leader level	cooperation in school	early warning system		
Tool for screening risk of dropping out	institutional level	data collection	distress signals	dropout	teacher / team level	
Weekly group discussion instead of form master class	classroom management	teacher / team level	situation analysis	trusting relationship	getting to know students	
Well targeted data gathering to prevent dropout	data collection	early warning system	distress signals	dropout	institutional level	
Wish my teacher knew	situation analysis	distress signals	trusting relationship	teacher / team level	getting to know students	

GUIDELINES						
1. Introduction	early warning system					
1.1 How we understand the early warning system at institutional level	early warning system	institutional level				
1.2 The main steps and core content of development of an EWS	early warning system	institutional level				
1.3 Expected results of using the CroCooS projects' EWS building methodology	early warning system	cooperation in school	cross-sectoral cooperation	teacher / team level		
2. Steps of institutional capacity building: the plan-do-check-act (PDCA) cycle	early warning system	intervention	institutional level			

2.1 Change management in the institution	**early warning system**	**intervention**	**institutional level**			
2.2 Goal setting	**early warning system**	**intervention**	**institutional level**	**situation analysis**		
2.3 Situation analysis	**early warning system**	**situation analysis**	**distress signals**	**institutional level**		
2.4 Action plan	**early warning system**	**institutional level**	**intervention**			
2.5 Intervention	**early warning system**	**institutional level**	**teacher / team level**	**school leader level**	**individual development**	**intervention**
2.6 Evaluation of the actions taken	**early warning system**	**institutional level**				
2.7 Corrections, improvements	**early warning system**	**institutional level**				
3. Connecting the Guidelines, the Toolkit and the Resource Pool: list of key words used for tagging	**early warning system**	**teacher / team level**	**school leader level**	**institutional level**		

RESOURCE POOL						
RP#0 / Early school leaving and dropout	**social context of ESL**	**EU policy**	**dropout**			
RP#1 / Early warning system	**early warning system**	**protocol**	**intervention**	**distress signals**	**cross-sectoral cooperation**	**student at risk**
RP#2 / Data gathering	**data collection**	**distress signals**				
RP#3 / Absenteeism	**absenteeism**	**data collection**	**distress signals**			
RP#4 / Deteriorating achievement	**distress signals**	**EU policy**	**student with low achievement**	**student at risk**	**trusting relationship**	
RP#5 / Grade repetition	**distress signals**	**student at risk**	**grade repetition**			
RP#6 / Boredom	**distress signals**	**low motivation**	**student at risk**			
RP#7 / Behaviour change – depression	**distress signals**	**students behaviour**	**student at risk**			
RP#8 / Bullying	**distress signals**	**student at risk**	**non-violent communication**	**bullying**		