



RECIPE -Regional Educational Centres in Pedagogical Europe

Case-Studies: An Overview

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein

INTRODUCTION

This article presents an overview of a linked set of casestudies undertaken by five partners in five European countries to investigate trans-European strategies and initiatives to combat early school leaving (ESL) from compulsory education. The reduction of Early School Leaving (ESL) to below 10% is a Europe 2020 headline target. The RECIPE project was funded for three years from 2013-2016 by the EU's Comenius Lifelong Learning programme. The full title of the project was Regional Educational Centres in Pedagogical Europe, from which the more convenient acronym RECIPE was derived (or perhaps contrived!). Overall, the RECIPE project addressed the problem of how Regional Educational Centres (RECs) can best help schools to achieve European and national targets for reducing ESL.

There are many types of RECs in different European countries. Some were established as pedagogical centres to update practising teachers on continuing developments in educational theory and practice. Many are ministries or government departments with not just advisory but also managerial and regulatory responsibilities for regional networks of schools. In general, RECs support the quality of their schools' provision and facilitate their implementation of educational policy and initiatives. Typically, they do this by disseminating information; organising conferences and providing training courses for teachers' continuing professional development (CPD); managing resource centres beyond the capacity of individual

schools; and providing management, budgetary and other forms of generic training and support for school leaders.

The project's overall aim was to contribute to the reduction of ESL across the European area. It sought to do this primarily by producing and disseminating research-based materials and systems to facilitate the training and support of teachers and other educational professionals and policy makers seeking to combat ESL within their own schools and related institutions. These are essentially practical aims to enhance everyday practice within schools and their classrooms. However, the collaborative programme of action research and development upon which we based our practical outcomes and products was focussed on the key issues of what works, where, and why, in the regional and local implementation of RECIPE strategies. This allowed us to suggest the more general analytical conclusions summarised in this article.

Thus, RECIPE was concerned with collaboration between schools and REC to reduce Early School Leaving. We defined ESL broadly to encompass non-completion of compulsory education and all related forms of chronic and persistent educational disengagement, at all stages of a child's schooling and formal pre-schooling..

Our target groups during and after the project's lifetime are:

School teachers and leaders;

Educational and managers in RECs;

Educational policymakers and other professionals,

all trying to implement what we call RECIPE strategies. These are initiatives and programmes to reduce ESL through collaboration between RECs and their "families of schools". The ultimate beneficiaries of our project are school students throughout Europe who are at risk of ESL, particularly those from socially disadvantaged groups, migrant, itinerant and ethnic minorities

We aimed to support the training and resource needs of our target groups by exploring and disseminating "best practice" in adapting RECIPE strategies to the diverse social, economic and demographic contexts of different European countries and regions. We pursued this aim as a consortium of five educational institutions in contrasting regions of five countries: Norway, Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Denmark.

Each partner conducted one or more case studies of RECIPE implementation in relation to specific contextual issues identified through an initial "state of the art" (SoA) analysis in their own educational networks. By the end of our three-year project in November 2016 we had produced:

- (1) State-of-the-Art reports from each country as the focus for each partner's subsequent case-studies, and as the basis a synoptic overview of RECIPE issues and strategies in each partner country
- (2) 8 case studies, some of which were professionally filmed for online dissemination, documented and analysed as guides to best RECIPE practice in specific social and educational contexts;

- (3) A cumulative resource pack of key materials in the theory and practice of RECIPE implementation produced by the partners themselves and by others
- (4) An online and/or residential training course in RECIPE implementation, with an accompanying RECIPE course handbook. The first pilot delivery of the course took place in Portugal at the end of September 2015. The second was delivered in Greece in October 2016 simultaneously with a two-day European RECIPE conference.
- (5) A website for project management and a publicly accessible website - www.recipeproject.eu (also www.recipeproject.info) as the basis for dissemination, exploitation and sustainability of the project's findings and outputs.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

In these ways and through these products, we sought in general to promote gender equality and inclusive approaches to learning. We focused in particular upon ESL by children from disadvantaged social groups, including students with migrant, traveller and Roma backgrounds. As noted above, we use a broad concept of ESL to include all forms of prolonged disengagement of school students of all ages from compulsory education. This brought kindergartens within the scope of the project's case studies, as well as primary and secondary schools, in accordance with so much research emphasising the often deep roots of ESL in the earliest years of children's educational experience.

We planned to achieve these overall aims through the pursuit of three more specific objectives:

1. Produce and evaluate initial "State-of-the-Art" reports on how schools and RECs were collaborating to reduce ESL within the local educational networks of our partner institutions in five European countries.
2. Undertake more intensive case-study research in each partners' local networks to identify and investigate what appears to be "best practice" of RECs in meeting schools' training and support needs to combat ESL
3. Develop, test and deliver a range of practical resources for meeting the ESL challenge through school-REC partnerships, principally:
 - (a) a cumulative series of web-based resource packs, including documentary analysis and filmed presentations of successful initiatives
 - (b) a RECIPE training course eligible for ERASMUS+ funding as a residential and/or on-line CPD programme. It will be adaptable as an induction course for new teachers and sustainable after the project's lifetime;
 - (c) an associated handbook on "best practice" in school-REC collaboration against ESL
 - (d) a publicly and freely accessible website for dissemination and exploitation of the project's findings and products during and after its lifetime

Our immediate target groups for the project's findings and products were:
school leaders and teachers;
advisors and managers in RECs;
and local educational policy makers.

Our aim was to provide them with analytical and practical resources for enhancing the effectiveness of school-REC collaboration. The project was intended to have a particular impact upon countries and regions where RECIPE strategies may need be adapted to specific and potentially problematic socio-economic contexts. Thus, our case studies included specific initiatives directed towards the children and families of migrant and traveller communities from early school years into secondary education. The aspiration was to have a positive impact not just upon educational, but on social integration more generally.

We saw the ultimate beneficiaries of our project as school students, their parents and communities, local employers, and the national governments and populations who bear the social and economic costs of ESL. All of these were stakeholders in the project. We hoped that in so far as the project contributed to a potential reduction in ESL, school students and their parents would benefit from the children's enhanced prospects for educational attainment, future employment and full citizenship. Other stakeholders would benefit more broadly from reducing the social and economic costs of ESL and increasing the skills and attitudes brought to labour markets by members of potentially marginalised and disadvantaged groups.

Representative members of our target groups were involved as communities of users in local needs analyses during our preparation for the project. After the project started they were further involved in two major ways.

Firstly, within local communities of practice, each partner:

- (a) liaised with head teachers, educational advisers and key members of local policy communities to identify best RECIPE practice and identify specific school milieu for more detailed case study;
- (b) helped class teachers to document and where appropriate film what is felt to be best practice,
- (c) convened representative meetings of target group members as RECIPE working groups to explore problems and best practice;
- (d)** worked with their community of users to evaluate project outputs

Secondly, as associated communities of practice in wider regional and national networks, members of target groups, school students and stakeholders were encouraged and supported to access the project's public website as an integral part of our practitioner-led methodology. Each partner promoted and supported the impact of the project in their regional educational networks. They stimulated already existing forums for discussing and evaluating the impact of RECIPE innovation. Stakeholders were involved through discussing and evaluating the project's progress at meetings of institutional governing bodies, PTA's, business-education partnerships etc.

Our previous experience as teachers, school leaders and REC Directors suggested to us the key role that RECs can play to integrate schools more efficiently and effectively with EU and national ESL initiatives but that, to date, their potential has been investigated and realised spasmodically and unevenly. This led us to the conviction that the potential of RECs in this context needs to be explored systematically and exploited more widely.

Our literature search and preliminary needs analysis also made it clear that it was necessary for school-REC partnerships to meet the ESL needs of increasingly diverse local communities. This diversity is increasing throughout the European area. Some communities have multi-generational patterns of settled immigration from outside Europe. Some are potentially more transient economic migrants within Europe itself. The parents of children of migrant workers from Poland for example, anticipating a return to that country for future employment, want them to maintain competence in their native language. Different again are the educational needs of traditionally itinerant communities in our partner countries, such as Roma in Greece and Portugal, and Travellers in Ireland. RECIPE strategies in all European countries, must of course, address the educational needs of disadvantaged children, particularly those from migrant and travelling communities. In two of our partner countries, as apparently different as Denmark and Greece for example, there are classrooms with 30-50% of their children from coming from such communities.

Operationally, we focussed upon the development of practical resources to meet the needs of school leaders, managers and teachers for appropriate training and support and the need to explore and disseminate "best practice" of RECs in providing this. The project's core was a programme of research and development based upon mainly qualitative action research. This combined a distinctively trans-European exploration of "what works, where, and why" in school-REC collaboration against ESL with the production and dissemination of practical resources informed directly by it. We adopted a practitioner-led "bottom-up" method of research and development designed to make a concrete, measurable impact upon implementing RECIPE strategies within our partners' own institutions and local networks.

In these ways, we sought to add value to a field which is increasingly well-provided with policy statements and general analyses of National and European ESL issues, but which needs more comparative, in-depth case-study research on the availability and impact of training and support materials. This specifically with regards to REC-school collaboration and their effectiveness in meeting the needs of practitioners

attempting to implement RECIPE strategies “on the ground” in a variety of educational and socio-economic settings. As well as adding analytical value through distinctively trans-European research into “what works where and why”, we aimed to add significant practical value by developing practical resources, systems and networks to meet these needs.

Preliminary needs analysis within our local educational communities had told us that meeting these needs requires locally adaptable and sustainable training and support based upon practically tested answers to the following key questions:

- (1) To what extent does there exist a core of RECIPE theory and practice
- (2) To what extent and in what ways does this need to be adapted to different socio-economic contexts, and the needs of particular disadvantaged groups.
- (3) What are the core components for a range of RECIPE deliverables, including an in-service training course, which addresses most economically and effectively the practical training and support needs of those implementing RECIPE strategies in a diversity of socio-linguistic and educational contexts?

DISSEMINATION

During the lifetime of the project an important objective was to raise awareness and discussion of its findings and outcomes amongst members of our target groups who had key roles to play in its eventual exploitation. We have always found that the core to effective dissemination is an attractive, up-to-date and easily navigable project website. We made this the principal vehicle for exploitation of the project’s outcomes by members of its target groups. It provided them with

- (a) a resource package of materials and references produced by the project team and other workers in the ESL field, selected to provide key analytical and practical resources for implementing RECIPE strategies; and
- b) the RECIPE training course and its associated 90-page handbook. Both were and are freely downloadable by schools, RECS, and all other educational or policybased institutions. They can be adapted by them for the residential and/or online training of their school leaders, teachers, advisers, and other professional staff.

Key elements of the RECIPE website, training course and handbook, are the case studies of best RECIPE practice produced by each of our partners. All of our previous experience in disseminating and exploiting the outcomes of projects such as ours suggests that what makes the greatest possible immediate impact upon target groups are concrete illustrations and examples of the practical work being done by colleagues addressing similar issues to their own in similar and different contexts. This is what leads them to look at the work of these projects in more detail and discuss with their own colleagues whether and how its resources and approaches could be adapted for use in their own institutions. Accordingly, we made as many case-studies as possible the subject of professionally produced filmed presentations. These are central and prominently signposted elements of the RECIPE website, training course, and course handbook. The latter was also professionally produced in collaboration with students and staff at one of our associated institutions, to enhance its immediate visual appeal and its accessibility for use by our target groups. Our

target groups for dissemination and exploitation included the key policy makers and stakeholders outlined above. Representative members of these groups were involved at all stages of the project including our prior needs analysis within local educational networks. The website's maintenance, funding and sustainable updating is ensured by one of the partners assuming this responsibility into the foreseeable future as part of its own mainstream educational advisory service.

In broader terms, sustainability is based on the delivery and ongoing adaptability of outputs and products to practically grounded user needs and practitioner-led pedagogical strategies at all stages of its development. In other words, the key to sustainability is a product which its users genuinely want and which remains responsive and adaptable to their needs. We recognised, however, that a "bottom-up" practitioner-led strategy for sustainability had to be complemented by the "official" mainstreaming and multiplication of the project's approaches, systems and products by regional and national policymakers across the European area. Hence the embedding of engagement with local policymakers from before the outset of the project as a basis for demonstrating the project's efficiency, effectiveness and enhancement of RECIPE strategies as a springboard for sustainable impact upon national and European policy communities.

CASE-STUDY REPORTS

In advance of conducting their casestudies, each partner produced an initial “State-of-the-Art” report following agreed guidelines. The background information they provided also familiarised the partners with each other’s national and regional educational systems and structures. Agreement was reached on how each report provided a focus for subsequent case-studies which would reflect each partner’s socio-economic and educational contexts, and further the project’s overall aims of identifying and illuminating trans-European issues and needs.

The State-of-the-Art reports are lodged on www.recipeproject.eu as downloadable resources for the strategic implementation of RECIPE strategies. The case studies themselves were undertaken largely over the course of the 2014-2015 school year. Initial case study reports from each partner, together with supporting and illustrative materials, were completed for use at the first pilot delivery of the RECIPE training course in Portugal in September 2015. In the light of partners’ experience and course delegates’ feedback the case study reports were revised and edited for the second pilot delivery in Greece in October 2016. The SoA and case study reports were the principal focus of the course programme for the two pilot deliveries. As such, they provided the core contents for the course handbook. This was prepared in advance to facilitate delegates’ preparation and provide documentary support for any accreditation claims they might make.

A professional production company was sub-contracted to film the case-studies of the Irish and Portuguese partners in advance of the first pilot delivery of the training course. Partners had agreed that these would provide good examples of Recipe strategies undertaken in partnership with a “conventional” REC (Clare Education Centre in Ireland), as compared with those involving a different type of agency performing an REC-type role (the Benfica Foundation in Portugal). REC Funding was available with the project budget either for professional filming of selected case studies or for each partner to produce their own “home-made” videos of their own case-studies. It was agreed that the optimum impact for dissemination and exploitation would come from professionally made films, but that other filmed presentations made by partners themselves could also be included for use at the training courses. The resulting films of the partners’ casestudies were built into the training course programme. They are accessible as freely available and downloadable resources from www.recipeproject.eu.

The main findings from the case-study reports are summarised below.

IRELAND

Our Irish partner was Clare Education Centre (CEC), located in the county and market town of Ennis in the West of Ireland. Education Centres are an integral part of the Irish education system. There are 21 in total, typically co-ordinating the local delivery of national initiatives and programmes and delivering a range of in-service training courses to the schools within their region. CEC services the CPD needs of 118 primary and 18 post-primary schools in County Clare, a significant number of which have high or very high proportions of children from immigrant and travelling communities. Nationally, in relation to all of Ireland’s 4 000 or so primary and post-

primary schools, CEC administers the School Leadership Programme, the Maths Recovery Programme in disadvantaged (DEIS) schools, and the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme for vocational education at post-primary level. The Centre has a full-time staff of 8 and over 100 part-time staff of trainers and advisors.

In relation to the RECIPE project, CEC works with its network of schools and a number of other partners including a university college of education to support a range of initiatives and programmes intended to reduce ESL. Nationally, the School Completion Programme has experienced considerable success with a retention figure of 90% in January 2014. Two broad conclusions from its SoA report provided a focus for CEC's case studies of implementing RECIPE strategies. Firstly, any further reductions of ESL were likely to be relatively hard won as those students still at risk from early leaving tended to have chronic school attendance issues, difficult personal histories, and problematic, often disadvantaged, family and community backgrounds. Secondly, interventions appeared to be more successful the earlier they could be made. There is a popular saying in Norway and other Scandinavian countries to the effect that a good kindergarten can immunise a child against any deficiencies in later schooling!

CEC's case-studies of best RECIPE practice focussed therefore on two initiatives in which the Centre had been closely involved and which appeared to have made a significant impact in reducing early leaving by children with particularly challenging backgrounds, including those from traveller and immigrant communities.

“Mata Sa Rang” (Maths Recovery in the Classroom)

Mathematics Recovery is an early intervention programme developed in the 1990s. It was a response to children's failure in early numeracy and the overwhelmingly negative, long-term impact this can have on educational disengagement and educational underachievement generally. It focuses on conceptual development and a problem-solving approach to numeracy and maths learning. It was introduced as an intervention programme, usually for level one students. This is mainly how it has been used in Ireland since 2004 as the National Maths Recovery Programme (“Mata sa Rang” in Irish).

Mata sa Rang (Maths Recovery in the Classroom) was piloted through CEC with 17 schools in its catchment area and has since been rolled out nationally. The initial Maths Recovery programme was designed for individuals. Mata Sa Rang is geared towards teachers' work with whole classes and groupwork in but is still based upon detailed initial assessment of each pupil's knowledge and strategies for numerical problem solving. Training teachers to assess pupils and apply maths recovery principles are central features. This is now done nationally through all of Ireland's 21 Education Centres. It consists of 5 x 3-hour sessions taking place outside of school hours over the course of a school term. In the school year 2012-3 almost 1100 teachers participated nationally. Since then a further 900 teachers have participated nationally.

LEGO Education Innovation Studio.

CEC works with colleagues at the LEGO Education Innovation Studio at Mary Immaculate College of Education in Limerick. In relation to the RECIPE project, CEC has been closely involved in the development of equipment, pedagogical innovation within classrooms, and CPD for teachers.

The Studio trains teachers to facilitate their students' exploration of the theoretical and practical underpinnings of science, technology and creativity, and to meet more general curriculum objectives in Literacy, Numeracy and Maths, using LEGO-based play and robotics activities designed specifically for the primary classroom.

A significant body of research-based literature indicates the particular value of such practical and play-oriented learning for school students who find difficulty engaging with more conventional curricula. It also indicates the significant positive impact that students' successful acquisition of such skills can have. It increases their general capacity for conceptual understanding, logical thinking, team working, and their overall self-esteem and educational self-confidence.

This is reflected in feedback which has been obtained by teachers and their students, thus:

From one teacher, "It fostered a great sense of team work within the class. All my pupils were completely enthralled by the project so much that I never had to correct them when they were working with the LEGO". Her pupils echoed her sentiments, describing the project as the "highlight of the year" and "absolutely amazing".

Similarly, from another teacher, "In such a technologically-driven environment, it is getting more difficult for teachers to engage and motivate students in the primary classroom. LEGO Education is special as it allows students of all abilities and backgrounds to get involved and to be part of a team in an interesting, fun and worthwhile manner."

GREECE

Our Greek partner is the Directorate of Primary Education for Western Thessaloniki (The Directorate). Thessaloniki is Greece's second city, a bustling cosmopolitan port and industrial-commercial centre with borders not far from Albania, Bulgaria and Turkey. Their SoA report outlined the structure of the Greek Educational System where education is compulsory from ages 6-15. In 2012, the Greek ESL rate was 11.4%. three principal measures of relevance to the RECIPE project have been adopted nationally to reduce this rate through early intervention at primary levels.

- (a) **Reception Classes 1 and 2** facilitate integration into the first 2 primary years of children from migrant groups, Roma communities, and others in need of specialized and intensive help in acquiring sufficient proficiency in the Greek language to benefit from and remain in mainstream education
- (b) **Integration Classes** grouping students with special educational needs into small classes for intensive, individualised support for a maximum of 15 hours per week until they can be integrated into mainstream education
- (c) **Collateral Support** from specialist support and educational staff to individual students whose needs and circumstances prevent their benefiting from regular integration classes.

The Directorate has been closely involved with supporting a number of initiatives to reduce ESL, two of which were selected for RECIPE.

Playing in the School Yard

5th and 6th grade pupils are trained and supported by teachers to play a peer-tutoring and mentoring role in leading the inclusive participation of all younger children in schoolyard games during recession periods and related timetabled sessions. The former has been particularly effective as a means of integrating marginalised students through games played during the day's school breaks.

The games themselves encompass a range of activities including Greek dancing and gender-neutral team games such as football and basketball. They facilitate the inclusion of all students into activities which develop team-working, self-discipline, rule-acceptance, positive self-esteem and a range of social skills, all attributes and attitudes which reduce the longer-term prospects of ESL by vulnerable children. The selection of which games to be played is made by the children themselves in line with their own interests and aptitudes

The teacher's role is to watch, guide and intervene where necessary, and train the pupil-trainers to help increase the attainment and self-confidence of younger students who already have experience of educational failure and low self-esteem. An indication of how successful this can be is that the case-study identified the most effective pupil-trainer as a 6th grade student with dyslexia and ADHD.

Robotics in Schools

It was noteworthy that at the outset of the project, our Irish and Greek partners had independently identified robotics-linked projects at primary level as particularly effective ways of motivating and retaining students at risk of ESL, and facilitating their successful transition to secondary education. The range of wider social skills and general curriculum knowledge which the Greek project aimed to develop through these projects were notably similar to those encompassed by our Irish partners.

The Directorate provided technical resources and CPD support for the adoption of the Robotics Programme into seven primary and middle schools including two Intercultural Schools set up to cater largely for the specific needs of children from Roma communities, many of whom had very problematic and often very "anti-education" family backgrounds, when indeed they had a family at all. The Robotics Programme had also been introduced into the elementary and middle schools of Volos Juvenile Prison, which has a high proportion of Roma pupils.

Comparisons between the Greek and Irish robotics programmes, provide instructive contrasts and similarities in the role and effectiveness of RECs. In Ireland the case-study initiatives were introduced in more of a top-down fashion, whilst in Greece they were developed by groups of enthusiastic and committed school leaders and teachers who then approached The Directorate for help and support.

DENMARK

In Denmark, as whole the ESL rate in 2012 was 9.1%, an issue being addressed by our Danish partner, the Department of Schools and Education for the Municipality of **Albertslund**, Greater Copenhagen. Until recently, each county had its own REC but most of them, including Albertslund have been merged into Municipal departments. Albertslund's work was developed around a Youth Strategy, which ran from 2009-2014. Between 2007 and 2014 the proportion of young people completing 9th grade education went from 74% to 84%, so meeting the Youth Strategy. As a follow up strategy, the target has been raised to 95% with similar measurable targets for pupils'

positive attitudes to their school experience, and equal levels of attainment for native and non-native speakers of Danish.

Albertslund introduced “Action Learning” as the pedagogical basis for all public schools in the Municipality, and every teacher was expected to participate in the training it provided. Success in reducing ESL is seen to be closely associated with this holistic introduction of a new methodology designed to break down more traditional individualised habits and create new environments for more educational engagement and more effective learning based on closer collaboration between teaching and pedagogical colleagues and more active participation of students in the ongoing assessment of their learning

The core elements of Action Learning are

(a) team-working between teachers and between teachers and pupils, and
(b) active reflection by teachers and pupils on what tasks they are undertaking, what learning are these actions intended to support, what are the learning goals for each task and how successfully have these learning goals been achieved. The underlying principles are close to those developed by the advocates of “Assessment for Learning” or “The Reflective Practitioner”.

For their own RECIPE case study our Albertslund partners looked in detail at how Action Learning has been introduced into the work of specific groups and teams of teachers. They interviewed teachers on the ways in which Action Learning has influenced their everyday classroom practice and their broad pedagogical approach, especially in working with students at risk of not completing their secondary education.

In general, patterns of response within the case study indicate teachers’ high levels of satisfaction with the introduction of Action Learning and with the initial and continuing training and support they receive in putting its principles into practice. For example:

Q. “Is it a good idea that every teacher in Albertslund gets the same tool – same method – to their daily work and the sharing of common practice”

A. “Yes, it is a good idea. We are working in teams on the same level, with the same guidelines and can agree on actions together. We set up the goals together and learn from each other in a positive way – not by lecturing but by wondering. We get and can exchange the same knowledge. This is for new as well as experienced teachers”.

At the same time, teachers’ responses indicate where Action Learning might still be more extensively implemented, for example through co-operation with teachers of similar subjects in different schools.

PORTUGAL

In Portugal, Teacher Training Centres have many REC-type functions such as providing CPD, evaluating teacher's classroom practice, and approving the progress of probationary teachers. However, they are established by associations of schools rather than municipal or national authorities. Resources and staff are allocated by the head teachers, who also appoint one of their number as Director.

Another distinctive feature of the Portuguese educational system is the involvement of EPIS – Entrepreneurs for Social Inclusion – in national initiatives to reduce ESL. Private companies help to resource and support the work of specially trained and dedicated teams of mediators who identify high-risk students early in their school careers and work to monitor and support their subsequent school careers.

In the school year 2007/8, EPIS mediators identified and supported 5812 such students nationally. At the end of 2008/9 the transition rate of pupils at risk increased from 63% to 77%. However, in 2012, national rates for non-completion of compulsory education were still high at around 20%.

By contrast, our Portuguese partner, the Carlos Gargate School cluster in Greater Lisbon had completion rates for these years of around 100%. This was significantly better than completion rates when the cluster was formed in 1995-96 - 90% for 5th and 6th grade students and about 80% for 7th, 8th and 9th students. As a case study in reducing ESL rates, there are striking parallels between the radical pedagogical innovations introduced since then, and those introduced into Danish schools through "Action Learning". There is the same strong emphasis on collaborative working between teams of teachers with strong support from related professionals, all focussed around precisely targeted support for the needs of individual students.

Associated with this whole school approach to explicit pedagogical development is the work within the cluster of the Benfica Foundation. Its project - "Para ti se nao faltares" – is a socio-educational intervention programme for 10-16 year olds at risk of suffering from social and educational exclusion. Using the Benfica brand to attract, motivate and retain "at-risk" students, they are invited to become involved in four types of activities – sports, ICT, journalism, and mathematics – but also rewarded for the development of a range of social skills and personal and behavioural characteristics such as persistence, punctuality, and the conscientious completion of tasks. In terms of transferable "best practice" there are striking parallels with the use of playground breaks in Greece, and project work in LEGO and robotics in other case studies, to increase students' engagement with school work, and enhance their social and personal skills and self-esteem.

NORWAY

In Norway, it is usual for all municipalities to provide services administering and supporting their educational provision, In Karmøy, close to the South West region of Stavanger fjord and its thriving off-shore oil and gas industries, REC services are organised and provided by its Department of Education and Culture, our partner institution in the RECIPE project. A distinctive feature of the Norwegian educational system is that every municipality is legally obliged to have an Educational

Psychological Counselling Service (PPT) to support children, adolescents, and adults experiencing educational disengagement.

Nonetheless, ESL had been identified nationally as a significant national issue. This formed part of the background to the launch of a national “New Possibilities” (Ny Giv) initiative from 2010-2014. Ny Giv focussed upon supporting at-risk students with particular emphasis upon the years before and after the crucial transition from lower to upper secondary education. Monitoring of this programme also demonstrated clearly the importance of earlier intervention. The two Karmøy case studies reflect this concern as well as the continuing legacy of the New Possibilities programme.

The Incredible Years (TIY)

This is a series of interlocking programmes to promote positive relationships between adults and disengaged young children who were already displaying and experiencing quite severe problems in conventional education. Intended long term outcomes, in addition to increasing academic attainment and reducing drop-out from schools, were a reduction of conduct disorders which might later lead to drug and alcohol problems, and even potential criminal activity. In accordance with research results emphasizing the importance of early years schooling, Karmøy decided to put its emphasis within this initiative on school and kindergarten programmes for 3-6 year olds and their parents.

Advisors from the Department were initially trained in the TIY programme and then ran courses for school and kindergarten staff. By 2015 almost all teaching staff in 15 of the 35 kindergartens in Karmøy had completed courses and kindergartens. Staff increasingly run the programme themselves with support from external advisors three times per half year. Systematic monitoring and evaluation is continuous and was drawn upon for the RECIPE case study. It suggested that the programme was having a very significant positive impact.

Vågen Learning Centre

Since the end of the 1980s Karmøy has had an alternative learning arena for secondary school children, initially boys with behavioural problems, who had effectively disengaged themselves from attending conventional schools. Holmen School was set up as an alternative work-based learning centre and now offers whole day, full-time education for disengaged boys and girls in the age group 13-16. Strong emphasis is placed upon achieving normal curriculum goals through the team-based accomplishment of practical long-term, “real world” projects, the most dramatic of which has been the construction from scratch over a 12-year period of a 52-foot sailing vessel. Pupils are also engaged in running a commercially viable catering operation. For both projects, pupils work with teachers more in a “foreman and apprentice” role than a conventional teacher-pupil relationship.

Vågen Learning Centre now also includes similar alternative work-based provision at Tarnet School, initially for girls with behavioural and emotional issues (but now also boys) who need close, safe and supportive contact with adults in a small group environment. Currently, the school can accept up to 9 pupils. It teaches traditional school subjects but with a more practical orientation towards arts and crafts, outdoor activities, food making, and technology.

The third element of Vågen alternative provision is based at Bøtoppen farm complex and was developed for disengaged and problematic pupils at primary as well as secondary level. It offers part-time provision out of normal schooling for 20-25 pupils from half a day to two days per week. They work on activities connected to daily farm life in addition to fishing, outdoor activities and a workshop for agricultural machinery but there are always located within the broader school curriculum. Bøtoppen also offers 8-week periods of alternative education for small groups of 20-25 pupils aged 10-12 who need particularly intensive support with behavioural and emotional issues before returning to more conventional schooling.

CONCLUSIONS

In their dual capacity as research findings and practical resources, the SoA and case study reports together help to illuminate the project's key questions of what works, where and why? Is there a core of RECIPE theory and practice which should inform any attempt to implement RECIPE initiatives? Are there particular initiatives which only work well in a specific political or socio-economic context providing for example legislative or financial support? Reliable and accurate answers to these questions would of course lead the researcher back to practical considerations of which initiative should therefore be applied in which context, and whether there are core elements which should be applied within all RECIPE initiatives. Our project methodology was designed to develop and disseminate practical training resources but it is possible to suggest some more general analytical conclusions.

All our State-of-the-Art and case study reports seem to demonstrate the effectiveness of core underlying principles for combatting ESL. These could be summarized as student-centred, holistic, opportunity-oriented learning. Student-centred in so far as curricula and learning styles are adapted to the needs and circumstances of individual students who take a responsible role for their own progress. Holistic, in so far as the whole school and all its staff are committed to these principles and trained and supported to apply them. Opportunity-oriented in so far as the courses students take are meaningfully oriented towards realistic opportunities to realise their personal and working potential.

There were two very general mechanisms, which seemed to underpin the effective implementation of these principles. Firstly, teaching and learning methods, which incorporate Action Learning/Assessment for Learning. These centre upon processes of ongoing formative assessment, ideally in each learning situation, involving feedback from students and their peers as well as teachers and support staff where appropriate. Secondly, whole school awareness of and responsiveness to each students' individual needs and circumstances, including their prior learning experience and attainment, their general aptitudes and interests, their preferred learning styles, their awareness of the opportunities open to them and their aspirations in relation to their opportunities.

Very often, students' family circumstances underpinned these diverse individual needs, especially amongst those at risk from early leaving. It is clear from our case

studies that the more effectively parents are engaged in supporting their children's learning, the more effective RECIPE strategies will be.

The case studies also indicate, for students who are or seem to be less academically inclined at a particular stage of their schooling, the importance of a curriculum which emphasises practical work with practical outcomes, and the practical relevance of their courses to their present and future interests. Equally, for school students of any age who seem to be at a very disturbed and challenging stage of educational disengagement, meaningful and positive relationships with adults who may be the only supportive ones in their lives, are particularly important

In general, European research, policies and strategies to reduce ESL have typically been developed by "higher-level" educationalists and policy makers providing general analysis and guidelines. Practical resources for implementation, based on case-study exploration of with particular reference to the role and potential of RECs are less much common. Our project recognised that is difficult to address the question of "what works, where and why?" in different European contexts, without "ground-level" trans-European study. This is the rationale behind our partnership of five different institutions in five different European countries, each of which has significant and successful experience of RECs working with a range of schools at different levels.

This was the kind of trans-European multi-country partnership which we felt was particularly well-equipped to explore both general and context-specific problems and the solutions developed for them, in a variety of contexts typical of European diversity. In this way we sought as partnership to provide a comparative and practical re-assessment of core principles and tools for implementing RECIPE strategies in all European contexts.

As key agents in the local implementation of RECIPE strategies and initiatives, our partners were enabled to share their trans-European experience with colleagues, students, target group members and stakeholders in their own educational networks. The sharing of this experience within the partnership, and with colleagues and institutions within each partner's local and regional networks, has been particularly marked in collaborative discussion and analysis of other partners' state of the art reviews, agreeing within the partnership the overall focus of each case-study and feeding this experience into their own colleagues' monitoring and analysis of their own RECIPE practice and case studies of local RECIPE implementation. This has allowed representatives from each partner to disseminate within their own institutions and local networks, their observations and experience of what seems to be good RECIPE practice in other partners' countries and regions.