Some European perspectives on promotion of access to education for traditionally marginalized communities:

a) Building bridges between the University of Malta and local communities

a) School systemic supports for promoting access to and participation in education.

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INTRODUCTION

Hoelscher et al. (2008) found that the most common reason given by students in England for choosing an institution (university or further education college) was its location. This was mentioned as a single reason for choice by one third of students regardless of the educational pathway chosen. Good location was defined as proximity with home or with family, proximity with a big city or well served by transport.
Two major US national surveys of participation (Carp, Peterson & Roelfs, 1974; Johnstone & Rivera, 1965) found the following to be especially significant barriers: cost, lack of time, inconvenient scheduling, lack of information about educational opportunities, job responsibilities, home responsibilities, lack of interest and lack of confidence. This research led to a well-known distinction between situational, dispositional and institutional deterrents to accessing education for marginalized groups. Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) added a fourth category, namely, information barriers.
Need to move from information model to relational dialogue model

Negative experiences of school as barrier to access (Cullen et al., 2000; Downes & Maunsell 2007)

FOCUS ON SYSTEM LEVEL SOLUTIONS:

- Community development role for the University as a community resource
- Active supports for potential students
- School system emotional supports to develop school climate and positive experience of schooling
International Research

Senior Management Formal 3rd level: 60 interviews
Senior Management Formal 2nd level: 26 interviews
Non-formal: 49 interviews
Prison: 26 interviews
Government Officials: 27 interviews

Questionnaires returned:
18 Primary Schools: 862; 9 Secondary Schools: 677
Total: 1,539 Focus Groups 57 Consultations with Community groups: 99
Availability of institution free of charge during summertime and evenings for community groups from marginalized areas (SI)

The Slovenian national report provides an example where an educational institution makes its rooms available free of charge for community groups:

Institution’s building is available for evening and summer events for many associations. Especially in the summer time, they can use it in the evenings for their meetings, lectures etc. Yes, yes, they also, also use it. Various societies use lecture rooms, above all as a place for their meetings, lectures and similar matters, don’t they? ... but this in the purpose of their organisation, this is to say we only lend the premises, that is, we give the premises, yes...(Ivančič et al., 2010).
Institution is open regarding availability for evening and summer events for the local community and/or target groups. There is no problem to give other profit or non-profit organisations rooms, when they are free. They do that free of charge they do not demand any money for that. They also let several student organisations (AISSEC, sports clubs etc.) to use their offices free of charge (Ivančič et al., 2010).
The Education Ministry official in Austria is enthusiastic about developing this issue in relation to schools opening up their premises:

What obstacles and/or opportunities in your opinion exist to use of the school building after school hours for adult education courses?

*This is a really important issue for us. It is easier with the federal schools which are administrated directly by the federal government. As owners, we have direct ways to act. This is where we have the distinct appeal to the directors. Their infrastructure is suitable to adults, with tables of the right height and IT work stations, etc. The elementary schools aren’t really useful although they are being used partially. There we would have the infrastructure and we cannot progress because the commitment is based on individuals. They say we don’t profit from this. On the contrary, I’m at a disadvantage because I have maintenance/cleaning costs. The personnel stops cleaning at 5pm, the people arrive at 6pm and the next day, the school is dirty…People working as school caretakers, for example, say: “this is not in my contract”* (Rammel & Gottwald, 2010).
The benefits of making State funded educational institutions, whether schools or universities, available in the evenings and summers for lifelong learning courses, both formal and informal is both from an economic efficiency and a community development perspective.

While there is evidence of this practice taking place in an ad hoc manner across a number of educational institutions and countries, there is little evidence currently of national or EU level leadership to progress this issue.
The obstacles to such a practice appear to be the need for a caretaker on the premises and insurance issues, as well as in at least some institutions a conception of territoriality. Some attitudinal resistance in educational institutions towards opening access to the school or university building is manifested through an argument for institutional autonomy.
A way to overcome such an argument is to recognise that these institutions usually receive state funding, and many are in state ownership.

Incentives could be provided to institutions to facilitate such opening of access, including through performance agreements between Education Ministries, and universities and schools.
Communication with spokespersons, opinion makers and community leaders in socio-economically marginalized or ethnic minority communities (PI)
University communication with spokespersons, opinion makers and community leaders in socio-economically marginalized or ethnic minority communities is an emerging dimension to good practice in relation to access. The Norwegian national report observes from one educational institution that:

‘The communities are approached by building on existing networks and associations as well as making use of spokespersons and opinion makers within the communities. Students with a corresponding ethnic background are engaged as role models, communicating in their familiar language at meetings with the target groups’ (Stensen & Ure, 2010).
Formal links between universities and NGOs representing marginalized groups (SI)

The Norwegian national report raises this linkage in the context of people with disabilities and their representative NGOs:

‘The informant said that recruitment had increased for groups with reading and writing disorders, and added that she believed that this was a result of the university’s increased effort for helping these students. Further on, she said that the university stayed in touch with many of the organizations for persons with disabilities, like the Association for Dyslectics, the Norwegian Association of the Blind and Partially Sighted, and the Association for deaf and people with hearing disorders’ (Stensen & Ure, 2010).

In contrast, the Bulgarian national report observes that ‘no interaction is evident between the NGO sector and the formal education system’ (Boyadjieva et al., 2010).
An access strategy of third level institutions which engages with primary and secondary students experiencing socio-economic disadvantage (SI)
The Scottish national report provides one of the rare examples of a strategic approach to access to education which engages with younger learners, including those at primary school level:

Whilst College A aimed to provide for all ages, recent initiatives (linked to government strategy) had focused on school leavers, those that either perhaps could not gain entry directly to university or who did not wish to go. The college was heavily engaged with local schools with many children from 3rd and 4th year of secondary schools (15 to 16 years of age) coming in through the ‘skills for work’ programme. Children as young as primary 5 (aged 9) were brought into the college as they were seen as a long-term investment for the college (Vice Principal, College A). Members of staff had a big involvement with schools: We teach in schools, we run special projects for primary school kids so the kids in school are aware of us from a young age, they are aware of the college and what it does and when it comes time for them to leave school, college is seen as an opportunity for them (Executive Director, College A) (Weedon et al., 2010).
Preparatory admission courses (SI)

A key issue also raised in the Bulgarian report is the need for State funding for such preparatory classes:

‘The university does not organize preparatory classes for disadvantaged groups. This is a good idea, but for this purpose universities should be funded by the state or donor organizations by a competition, quota or other indicator. This is not possible for now. The universities themselves have no sufficient funds for this activity. And there is no guarantee that if they conduct such activity they can reap its fruit. There is no way to commit people to being students at only one institution’ (Boyadjieva et al., 2010).
Estonian national report observes a tradition of preparatory classes in a university, though classes requiring payment:

‘The university has offered preparatory courses for more than 50 years. The courses are offered by the Open University. The courses are offered for a fee and focus on subjects of state examinations: physics, maths, chemistry, mother tongue (essay writing)’ (Tamm & Saar, 2010).

‘We offer courses of different duration – a year, a couple of months and shorter. These are evening courses offered in Tallinn, Pärnu and some other towns. Participants are those who finished upper secondary education some years ago or those who wish to re-take the state examinations. After finishing the course participants go to different higher educational institutions’ (Tamm & Saar, 2010).
Slovenian national report reveals a lack of preparatory courses for university:

‘They don't have any preparatory or foundation courses. They only have differential exams for those students that are not fulfilling the enrolment requirements or those coming from other institutions of higher university education where the programme was somewhat different’ (Ivančič et al., 2010).
Bulgaria ‘The most effective way for improving the access of students from disadvantage groups to higher education is through conducting auxiliary classes and preparatory admission courses. Thus disadvantaged groups will be prepared to begin and to complete their education successfully’ (Boyadjieva et al., 2010).
Study workshops to provide academic support

A centre for academic support is available at the following institution in Belgium:

‘Like many other colleges for higher education, Hogent has a centre for study advice and coaching and a centre for students. The first one offers advice on the students’ learning path (certificates, credits, exams, validation of prior learning, fulltime or part-time studying, etc.) and offers support during the learning process (tutoring, coaching, individual course units, etc.)’ (Vermeersch & Vandenbroucke, 2010).
Such centres are also a feature of educational institutions interviewed in the English national report, with the term ‘learning zone’ being employed and with a flexibility that allows for a drop-in service:

‘At the college, there is a learning zone which is open generally office hours, 9 till 4 so you can drop in, but also you could have specific learners, additional learning support. If it’s more than I think it’s 50% of the group that need it then they have it within the class, the whole group have it, but generally you can have it on a one to one basis. Or the Learning Zone is where you can just drop in, so if you think oh I’m struggling with my assignment, there are people in there who staff it and can support you. And I think that’s a really good service that’s offered’ (Senior) (Engel et al., 2010).
According to a lecturer in the college, ESOL support is provided through the Learning Zone, where there is a referral procedure where we refer them. And also the mentors are there to help them. In addition, there are significant peer supports that come from the student body, they get quite an extensive training package. We’ve had both actually, we’ve had peer mentors and peer supports, they’re usually people who have struggled themselves, who have then wanted to give something back really. A lot of work, we’ve done a lot of work with the student liaison team who offer enrichment activities (Inclusion manager) (Engel et al., 2010).
Financial supports

Estonia

‘Underrepresented groups do not get discounts and financial support to buy textbooks, etc. This is the problem that needs to be solved’ (Tamm & Saar 2010).

‘Three quarters of the providers of higher education do not make any concessions to the underrepresented groups (e.g. fee, etc). What can the ministry do to help?’

_We are planning to establish a support system based on needs. I cannot say that the universities are too interested in this system_ (Tamm & Saar, 2010).
UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES
AND STRATEGIC VISIONS
The English national report highlights how particular third level educational institutions place access central to their institutional ethos, strategies and structures:

‘In the college governance, *there is a standards and diversity committee, and that’s like board of governors level, I attend that, where that really does monitor everything we’re doing, very good, they want to know* (Inclusion manager). The purpose of the standards and diversity committee is *to make sure that those whole access, widening participation, equalities issues were being acted to* (Inclusion manager). The dedication to issues of widening participation and access is shown through the college’s range of activities’ (Engel et al., 2010).
‘As stated by a senior management representative, we try and go out into the communities, we go out into schools...part of the aims to be inclusive is the college’s objective to respond to the needs of its local community: we do go out and work in communities where the need is, and it is almost always successful. If you go out and work with people and I think that would be a major part of our tactic, if people aren’t coming in, go out and work with them (Inclusion manager). This fits in with the overarching ethos of the college, as perceived by a senior manager at the college, which is to be as learner-centred and community-centred as possible. The Inclusion and Diversity manager stated the importance of being needs led, being genuinely inclusive’ (Engel et al., 2010).
A similar strategic, structural focus to access to education is evident from higher education institutions in the Scottish national report:

‘The college’s strategic plan 2007-2010... stated that the college had no desire to become a larger college and wished to continue to maximise funding to prioritise students from the most deprived backgrounds and contribute to social cohesion throughout the city. According to the Assistant Principal, College B had a responsibility ‘to provide innovative and inclusive education for learners’ (Weedon et al., 2010).
UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES
AND STRATEGIC VISIONS
Slovenia: ‘There is also no formal committee to promote and implement an agenda for increased access in the college and they are also not systematically monitoring the number of marginalized students. Yes, I know ... not separately, separately no, but we would tackle this if the number or pressure were, let’s say, bigger’ (Ivančič et al., 2010).
According to the Lithuanian National Report, there is a need for external review of strategies and structures of educational institutions in relation to access. This implies direction from a national level for such reviews:

‘It may be presumed that a sceptical attitude to institutional strategies may be a reason why there is no clear structure and systemic approach while promoting the access of adults to the education system. It is acknowledged that institutional strategies work only through study programs which are more or less based on those strategies. Moreover, even though internal evaluation is being constantly conducted, there is no external review process. A problem of developing a systemic approach could be solved if “paper” strategies and implemented programs would be more interrelated. Also, the system of external review should be better elaborated’.

‘Social Inclusion/Access/Lifelong Learning Committee at institution level [of the private third level institution] does not exist. This kind of support is based on personal will and initiative’ (Taljunaite et al., 2010)
Development of outreach institutional strategies that go beyond mere information based models (SI)

* The European Commission (2006) gives emphasis to an information based approach to reaching those traditionally excluded and alienated from the educational system:

‘More information about the advantages of attending higher education is essential, notably for people who do not attempt to enter higher education because they are unaware or unconvinced of the opportunities it affords’ (Lee and Miller, 2005; Studley, 2003; Botelho and Costa Pinto, 2001).
This point is not without validity as, for example, according to the National Adult Learning Survey (Scotland) (Ormston et al., 2007), learners are more likely to have received information about learning than those with low/no qualifications.

A Commission staff working document (2009) reiterates this preoccupation with an informational focus and conceptualizes this issue in terms of efficiency and its lack.
‘Asked whether parents with immigrant background were not reached, our informant replied: *No, it was too difficult, because it had to be a person from the local environment which could, who knew different places and who was engaged, quite simply* (Stensen & Ure, 2010).

‘My informant had an immigrant background and her experiences and knowledge was crucial for how they decided to recruit participants to the project. She knew where to reach them and how to move forward’ (Stensen & Ure, 2010).
* The notion of an abstract other or abstract audience has been criticised by Gilligan’s (1982; 1990) research in developmental psychology. Benhabib (1987) states:

‘In assuming the standpoint ["of the generalized other"], we abstract from the individuality and concrete identity of the other’ (p.87).
* In the tradition of narrative, cultural psychology (Bruner, 1992; Bruner & Amsterdam, 2000), there is a need to move beyond processing of information to construction of meaning and relationships for these target groups in relation to educational institutions

* It is not mere information gaps that are lacking, but rather gaps in strategies and modes of communicating.
The strength of the Slovenian festival approach is that it requires the target group to be actively involved in the design of the project and not simply be a passive consumer of it, as in the Austrian and Lithuanian examples of open doors days.

Active learning, constructivist principles are well recognised in lifelong learning but also need to be applied to outreach strategies.
Slovenian national report reveals a lack of preparatory courses for university:

‘They don’t have any preparatory or foundation courses. They only have differential exams for those students that are not fulfilling the enrolment requirements or those coming from other institutions of higher university education where the programme was somewhat different’ (Ivančič et al., 2010).
The arts as a key bridge into societal and systemic participation via nonformal education (SI, PI)

Theatre and drama are observed in the Slovenian national report as being a key local community interest given expression through nonformal education:

‘We noticed that here in our area hobby theatre is very much alive. Also, smaller villages have plays, but above all they lack knowledge how to promote themselves, and the matter stops, because this is not there. ...Because here they are proving themselves in their immediate area. ... With a successful role in one of such plays... I think that bears many other things with it’ (Ivančič et al., 2010).
* This strong presence of the arts in nonformal education is also evident in the Belgian national report:

‘the art and cultural heritage sector. Non-formal education in this sector is organized by arts institutions and individual artists, museums, music groups, theatres and music groups. They offer several cultural activities aiming at the general development of cultural competencies’ (Vermeersch & Vandenbroucke, 2010).
Funded strategies to develop local community lifelong learning centers (SI)

- The Lisbon European Council conclusions (paragraph 26) propose turning schools and training centres into multi-purpose local learning centres, all linked to the Internet and accessible to people of all ages. This is a major challenge for all Member States.
- The OECD (2007, p.75) highlight that Finland has over 260 adult education centres, which have evolved from adult vocational training to offer wider learning opportunities for the entire adult population.
- The bridge between these centres and the formal educational system is illustrated by the research of Nicaise et al.(2005) which observes that at least 28% of all young people admitted into tertiary education in Sweden had passed through municipal adult education or liberal adult education.
- Community learning centres offer a potentially key pathway and bridge in providing outreach to marginalized communities and also connection over time between the nonformal and formal system.
- *We run these where, that meet the needs of local people. So it could be in a church hall. It could be in a community centre. Anywhere that suits the needs* (Weedon et al., 2010).
CONCLUSIONS

a) Building bridges between the University of Malta and local communities
Community development role for the university as a community resource:

- beyond information to outreach dialogue
- arts strategy for community inclusion, motivation and belonging
- physical, community based presence of the university in targeted areas, such as through community lifelong learning centres
- university campus available free of charge for groups from targeted areas
- university campus visits for students and parents, and lifelong learners from targeted communities
- university structures include direct representation from targeted communities representatives with input into explicit university strategies for access
Active supports for potential students:

- preparatory admission courses
- a primary school outreach strategy
- financial supports
- diverse university entrance pathways: reserved admission places for marginalized students?
THEME 1
Conflict resolution strategies for teachers and professional development to promote the social support role of teachers

THEME 2
Bullying prevention strategies in school

THEME 3
Emotional trauma (bereavement, rape, sexual abuse, bullying, family break up, sleep related problems) – supports needed to prevent early school leaving

THEME 4
Alternatives to suspension

THEME 5
Prevention of substance abuse
THEME 1
Conflict resolution strategies for teachers and professional development to promote the social support role of teachers

- In the EU Commission public consultation ‘Schools for the 21st century’, classroom management strategies were raised as an issue needing to be better addressed by teacher initial education (see also Commission staff working document 2008)

Downes (2011): Lithuania: The secondary education system in Lithuania according to the school management:
The attitudes towards students have to change and then they will feel better at schools. [...] at the moment students are selected under the criteria „good“ and „bad“ and those who get the „bad“ label do not want to stay at such school – they leave it (Taljunaite et al., 2010).

Downes (2011): Slovenia: You see that he needs help, he needs a hand..., a talk...however... If there were any one to talk to. ... A single teacher may retain a pupil in school and this often happens (Ivančič et al., 2010).
Professional development of teachers regarding student discipline and special needs students are both, in particular, central to early school leaving prevention.

OECD (2009) ‘classroom discipline, aggregated to the school level, is a core element of instructional quality. In PISA, it is positively related to the school’s mean student achievement in many participating countries (Klieme and Rakoczy, 2003). Also, it has been shown that – unlike other features of classroom instruction – there is a high level of agreement about this indicator among teachers, students and observers (Clausen, 2002)’.

Key results observed in TALIS (OECD 2009) include that:

• One teacher in four in most countries loses at least 30% of the lesson time, and some lose more than half, in disruptions and administrative tasks – and this is closely associated with classroom disciplinary climate, which varies more among individual teachers than among schools
An emotionally supportive school climate matters for Early School Leaving prevention

- US and Australian adolescents cite a sense of isolation and lack of personally meaningful relationships at school as significant contributors to academic failure and to their decisions to drop out of school (Institute for Education and Transformation 1992; Wehlage & Rutter 1986; Hodgson 2007; McIntyre-Mills 2010)

Downes, Maunsell & Ivers (2006):

- Approximately 74% of pupils at primary level (6th class) state that they **are** treated fairly by teachers in school.
- Approximately 55% of students at secondary level (first year) state that they **are** treated fairly by teachers in school.
- Approximately 15% of pupils at primary level (6th class) state that they **are not** treated fairly by teachers in school.
- Approximately 25% of students at secondary level (first year) state that they **are not** treated fairly by teachers in school.

*These differences between 6th class primary and 1st year secondary are statistically significant i.e., there is a statistically significant increase in perception of being treated unfairly by teachers in secondary school compared to primary school.*
No sunlight!
Downes and Maunsell (2007)

Responses from students who perceived that they were not treated fairly by teachers include the following:

- No some think they own the school
- The students aren’t treated fairly, I don’t know why, they just don’t and it’s very clear
- No they pick on certain students
- Fairly by some but teachers that hated another family member they think you’re like them when you’re not
- Most of them are very, very nice but there is just 1 or 2 that I don’t like one bit
- Mainly yes but 1 or 2 can be discouraging towards me. I am a good student and do my work mostly so they shouldn’t have a reason to be unfair
- No some teachers would talk to you harshly & then act so sweet in front of your parents
- No they pick on certain students
- No, because some teachers are bullies towards the students
- I’m leaving after the Junior [Certificate] because I hate it
- Would change the way the teachers treat the students
- I can’t wait to leave, I would leave tomorrow if I had the choice because I get picked on by a teacher
THEME 2

• Bullying prevention strategies in school

-In the EU Commission public consultation ‘Schools for the 21st century’, tackling bullying, violence and intolerance in schools was an emerging theme (see also Commission staff working document 2008). Teachers and principals consistently underestimate levels of school bullying (Tattum, 1997; Downes, 2004, see also Young, Glogowska & Lockyer, 2007 on related divergences).

-Downes (2011): Estonia: ‘The majority of those who have dropped out of or left their previous school are lower secondary students. They had conflicts with teachers or other problems and could not continue in their old school’ (Tamm & Saar, 2010).

_lower secondary students are younger than 17 years old. They are referred to us by the Department of Education; we cannot admit such students without the Department’s approval. They could not cope in their old school. (...) Some schools (in particular those that have a social worker) refer their problematic students to us. The main problem is bullying. This year we have two such students and they are doing well. Our students are older and bullies cannot dominate (Tamm & Saar, 2010).
Downes (2004):

There were lots bullied in the class (4th class, F, 10),
I don’t know but lots (4th class, F, 10),
I don’t think anybody has been bullied (4th class, F, 10)
None in my class have been bullied (4th class, F, 10).
I’d have guards to guard me to stop anyone starting on me (4th class, M, 10)
I would put cameras on the walls so they would know who is bullying (4th class, M, 10)
bullies, blow up the school (5th class, M, 11)
I would make all the school a bully-free zone (6th class, M, 12)
If I had the power I would change the bullies out of the school (4th class, F, 10)
I would change all the bullies in my school to geeks (6th class, F, 12)
One of the biggest problems in the school is bullying (5th class, M, FG) but you don’t wanna be a rat (5th class, M, 11)
If their hair is different or if they’re smaller they would get called names get more people on yard duty (5th class, M, 11)
I would be absent because sometimes I get bullied (5th class, M, 11)
No-one will end up in school if they keep getting bullied (6th class, M, 12)
Yes I was absent I was being bullied (5th class, M, 11)
One of my friend is being bullied. They can go to a teacher...If I didn’t go to school it would probably be because someone was bullying me (6th class, F, 12)
If there was no bullies around (5th class, M, 11)
Yes because I am bullied (5th class, M, 11)

Anti-bullying approaches can be built into cooperative strategies and emotional expression across the curriculum, as well as requiring a community level focus (Downes, 2009)
THEME 3
Emotional trauma (bereavement, rape, sexual abuse, bullying, family break up, sleep related problems) – supports needed to prevent early school leaving

Irish Parliament and Senate Report on early school leaving (2010): Case studies of those who left school early due to trauma factors of rape, bereavement, sexual abuse

Downes (2011) Norway: 11 percent of the same group in SP3 stated that family related problems were a problem for participating in educational activity. We asked our informant how he thought public policy in this area could contribute to offering guidance services that go beyond the subjects taught at the institutions. Our informant responded:  
Many students have mentally related problems and students have a high suicide rate. For many, being a student is a lonely affair. It goes without saying that the healthcare services must be equipped with a professional staff (Stensen & Ure, 2010).

Downes (2011): Bulgaria: *The College does not have a specialized unit that provides emotional support to the students. There is a Career Development Center at SWU, which also renders its services to students from the Technical College. SWU has no institutionalized forms of providing emotional support to students (e.g. a specialized unit, psychologists)* (Boyadjieva et al., 2010).
Wider referral processes – reach withdrawn kids (Doll, 1996; Downes, 2004): Downes (2004) ‘being ignored because your head is down working is like a slap in the face’

Downes & Maunsell (2007):

Why do you think some people are dying?

- because there is no one to talk to
- we should do more personal development
- girls slit their wrists
- girls take tablets and slice their wrists
- girls sleeping around to hurt themselves, other ways instead of slitting wrists
Taras & Potts-Datema (2005) note that most children need at least 9 hours of restful sleep each night and conclude that:

‘The preponderance of literature that recognises the detrimental effects of sleep disorders is astounding and perhaps not fully appreciated among many primary care providers, school health professionals and educators’.

Other research has shown that adolescents require at least 8.5 hours of sleep per night and more appropriately 9.25 hours of sleep (Carskadon et al., 1980). A review by Blunden et al. (2001) of 13 articles demonstrated that reduced attention, memory, intelligence and increased problematic behaviour resulted from sleep-related obstructive breathing. Other international studies have shown a relationship between insufficient sleep and lowered academic performance (Allen, 1992; Kowalski & Allen, 1995; Schuller, 1994; Wolfson & Carskadon, 1996, 1998).
“At what time do you usually go to sleep on a weekday?” (Downes & Maunsell, 2007)

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<th>Midnight</th>
<th>After midnight</th>
<th>Varies/NA</th>
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<tr>
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<td>81%</td>
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Reasons for sleep loss – age 11-12:

Thinking related:

*Sometimes, because I think a lot of something.*
*Because you are thinking about something.*
*Always because I’m always thinking about things*

Worry/stress/fear related:

*Sometimes I have problems sleeping because I am worried...*
*All my stress*

Bereavement related:

... *sometimes its cause I think about my nanny who is in heaven*
*I do sometimes if there is something on my mind like people in hospital. Or people who have passed away*

Physical related:

*Yes because I’m hungry.*
*Sometimes I have insomnia and can’t sleep till 2 o clock. I hardly do any exercise and all my energy is stored in my body. Downes & Maunsell (2007)*
THEME 4
Alternatives to suspension

• Downes (2011): Lithuania: According to management and the teacher interviewed approximately 10 percent of students are expelled from school in each year. The reasons are usually behaviour problems, bullying, harassment, aggressiveness i.e. non-academic reasons prevail. The teacher mentioned that there were no expelled students for not attending classes. The statistics, according to the management can be collected, but this will not solve the problem (Taljunaite et al., 2010)

• Downes (2011): Slovenia: Parents report to the school the reason of absence and the school just keeps evidence. As a result the number of pupils expelled from school because of not excused absence from classes decreased considerably. None was expelled in this school year... In fact we try with the non-punishment policy, as it used to happen in the past that a pupil was punished with unexcused hours of absence but he was not the key person who contributed to that, but all others including the parents who had forgotten to provide written excuse to the class teacher. And it happened that a potentially good electrician, mechanic etc. was suspended/expelled from the school and that was not good (Ivančič et al., 2010).
Downes (2011) Russia: A multidisciplinary team plays a key role in devising alternative strategies to suspension in this example from a Russian school:

The school doesn’t practice expulsion or suspension of students. Instead, the psychological support service team regularly conducts preventive meetings and conversations with students who have discipline or study problems. Each school has a Preventive Council aimed at dealing with ‘problem’ students...The psychologist and social teacher conduct conversations and meetings with adult students in case their discipline or studying practices are improper. Use of preventive measures as an alternative to expulsion shows that the school staff aims to keep as many students at risk of early leaving at school as possible, which proves how much they are indeed interested in students and care for them (Kozlovskiy, Khokhlova & Veits, 2010).
Downes & Maunsell (2007):

-Suspension is stupid, just gives them a break
-If you swing on a chair that’s enough for a suspension
-I was one of the boys who got suspended, cos being very cheeky
-About 8 out of 17 suspended, she suspended 7 people in one day
- Worst thing about school getting suspended
-He says if you do that boy you’ll be out of the school in a second and you’ll never come back
-He threatens you, I’ll suspend you, I’ll expel you and you’ll never come back
-Get suspended for taking a sup of water

One service provider suggests that: suspension used a lot, need to put something in place if suspended, not much endeavour to keep them in school.

-Need suspension only for serious things
- getting sent home for 3 days isn’t punishment
- sit outside the door for hours
-Teachers leave you in corridor
- Suspended for phone ringing in class and for talking
- Suspended for not doing homework
- Three bookings and then detention, bookings for very little i.e. talking or being a minute late
- Suspended for 3 days if you don’t do detention
- 3 suspended, 2 for fighting, the other for being late, messing

Priority needs of some of the schools emphasised:
- Individual discipline programme for disruptive boys
- Teacher to work with children with challenging behaviour in small groups above quota
- Permanent in-school counselling service

The Irish post-primary figure of 5% for suspension, applied to the total population of 332,407 students equates to well over 16,000 students suspended from post-primary schools in 2005/6 (ERC/NEWB 2010).
Early school leaving is a mental health issue!

- Kaplan et al’s (1994) North American study of 4,141 young people tested in 7th grade and once again as young adults which found a significant damaging effect of dropping out of high school on mental health functioning as measured by a 10-item self-derogation scale, a 9-item anxiety scale, a 6-item depression scale and a 6-item scale designed to measure coping.
- This effect was also evident when controls were applied for psychological mental health as measured at 7th grade. The significant damaging effect of dropping out of school was also evident even when controls were applied for gender, father’s occupational status, and ethnicity.
- Though early school leaving can have different effects across countries (Van Alphen, 2009)
A focus on substance abuse related issues is a key dimension to prevention of early school leaving (Downes, 2003; EMCDDA, 2003, 2003a) and yet it is given little emphasis across the different examples from schools across the national reports in Downes (2011). One exception is the Russian national report which observes the following important approach:

The main goal of the psychological support service is to provide favorable conditions for all students, build up trustworthy relationships between them and the school and provide psychological help for those students who lack it in their families.

They often come here with their spirit broken. They are offended at the world and intimidated, so it’s very important for us to help them form a strong, stable and harmonious personality, who is fully aware of his/her desires and ambitions. We want to bring up a person who understands that s/he is not alone in the world and that there will be many problems on his/her life path so we teach them to be ready for those problems and be able to overcome them. (Kozlovskiy, Kokhlova & Viets, 2010)
Need for strategies to challenge fatalism which is a risk factor for drug use and other self-harming behaviour, including a fatalism associated with early school leaving (Kalichman et al., 2000, Downes, 2003; Ivers, McLoughlin & Downes, 2010)

O’Connell & Sheikh (2009) explored non-academic (non-cognitive) factors in early school leaving and found strong correlations with smoking and with lack of daily school preparation for early school leaving in a sample of over 25,000 8th grade US students from over 1,000 schools.
THEMES 1-5: A COMMON SOLUTION

Emotional support services as part of a multidisciplinary team

Downes (2011): Slovenia: The school has established a school counselling service which is funded by the Ministry of Education and Sport and regulated by the law on Organisation and Financing of Education, article 66, item 3 (Official Gazette, 98/2005, 07.11.2005). This is typical for Slovenian education system. Main tasks include:

- various prevention activities related to drug abuse, aggressive behaviour; workshops on questions regarding sexuality,
- workshops on independent learning and learning how to learn,
- counselling on personal and social development,
- dealing with social issues of pupils and with other problems related to learning, discipline etc.,
- preparation of adjusted programmes for pupils with special needs and monitoring of progression, counselling and provision of help when needed (Ivančič et al., 2010).
Downes (2011) Estonia:

‘Some young learners (who have dropped out of their former school) come from problematic or disadvantaged families or have lost contact with their families and therefore lack elementary life skills, such as managing one’s money, etc. They also need support to cope with personal problems – someone to talk to. Such support can be provided by teachers. All schools teach family studies but these are not enough. Such students need extra support and an opportunity to turn to somebody – the school head, a teacher, a psychologist, etc. – outside classes. Such conversations improve students’ communication skills and the skill of solving problems’” (Tamm & Saar, 2010).
Emotional needs for those at risk of early school leaving do not have to be at the clinical level of emotional disorders

Downes (2011) Lithuania:

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No we do not have a psychologist at school. I think s/he is needed. Then it would be easier for us to understand why students behave the way they behave (Taljunaite et al., 2010).
An outreach dimension to family support and emotional support

‘There is a clear need for emotional support services emerging in Austria. This is the response of an Austrian Education Ministry official to this issue:

*In another part of our research almost half of the respondents of ISCED 2 level participants stated that personal or emotional problems keep them from pursuing their education.* Are there plans on a national level to introduce supportive offers in Austria? In your opinion, how could this situation be improved on a federal level?

*This brings me back to the working group of federal government and federal provinces’ governments and the plans concerning the lower secondary diploma. We have a strictly calculated size of pedagogical support because we said it’s not working properly without...It is starting with the “visiting” education work, where we want to approach the target group proactively instead of waiting for them to come by themselves. There must be somebody here for them permanently and a certain amount of time should be calculated for this kind of care’* (Rammel & Gottwald, 2010)
CONCLUSIONS

b) School systemic supports for promoting access to and participation in education
School system emotional supports to develop school climate and positive experience of schooling

- Conflict resolution strategies for teachers and professional development to promote the social support role of teachers
- Bullying prevention strategies in school
- Emotional trauma (bereavement, rape, sexual abuse, bullying, family break up, sleep related problems) – supports needed to prevent early school leaving
- Alternatives to suspension
- Prevention of substance abuse
- Hunger in school?
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