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Drop-out prevention

Handbook for schools, class teachers, non-pedagogical staff and school support teams in Slovakia

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Introduction

Across Europe, some adolescents are at risk of not completing upper secondary education. Referred to as pupils at risk of dropping out or pupils at risk of early leaving from education, these young people have different profiles.

It is likely that you have met them in your schools and classes.

Sometimes they are boys, sometimes girls. They might be Ukrainian refugees or other migrant adolescents. They might come from Roma or other vulnerable or marginalised communities. They might be young people facing adverse life circumstances, or those who have gradually withdrawn, disengaged, or disconnected from education for various reasons.

This Handbook has been developed with the support of educators from Slovakia and UNICEF. It aims to help you:

- **Reflect** on what could be done to prevent young people at risk from dropping out of school.
- **Inform** what you do as teachers, school managers, other school professionals and support team members to help young people at risk of dropping out.[1]
- **Empower** yourself to take small and big steps that make a difference in the lives of young people at risk.

This Handbook complements the content provided under **Support Measure #11** on Supporting dropout prevention and early leaving from primary and secondary education, and its companion manual.

As teachers, educators, other school professionals and school managers, we often feel overwhelmed with administrative tasks and heavy workloads. By introducing small changes in how we relate to and support young people at risk of dropping out, we can make a bigger difference than we often think.

This is why this Handbook was developed.

- To help your school be more aware of young people at risk of dropping out.
- To help you be more systematic about how you respond to the needs of young people at risk of dropping out, in your teaching, and in your individual and small group support.
- To share ideas and best practices across Slovakia in dropout prevention.

While this Handbook focuses on adolescents, the principles for dropout prevention and early response described are fully relevant for primary school children too.

1 MoE, How to be more successful at school, available at: 20785.8d2676.pdf20785.8d2676.pdf

Terminology

Dropping out refers to the process of a pupil abandoning his or her studies before completion of a cycle of education, whether compulsory or not.

Children at risk of dropping out are those children enrolled in any compulsory or post-compulsory provision but who are displaying risk factors or signs indicating that they might drop out, such as a high level of absenteeism.

The term **early leaving from education and training** is used when pupils leave education and training with only lower-secondary education or less and who are no longer in education and training. This includes young people who leave education after failing their final upper-secondary exams. This terminology is particularly used within the European Union. Eurostat calculates an 'Early Leavers from Education and Training' indicator to describe individuals aged 18-24 who have completed at most a lower secondary education and were not in further education or training during the four weeks preceding the labour force survey.[2]

School absenteeism is a generic term referring to pupils missing classes. Pupils can be absent for "legitimate" or "non-legitimate" reasons, i.e. school absences can be excused and authorised by the school or unexcused and unauthorised. The latter case is referred to as school truancy.

Content Overview

The Handbook is structured around 5 key steps in dropout prevention.

Each step includes:

- Guidance and **tools for practice**
- Examples and suggestions from **practices in Slovakia**

Additional information and tools are included in the Annexes, as well as a list of Resources.

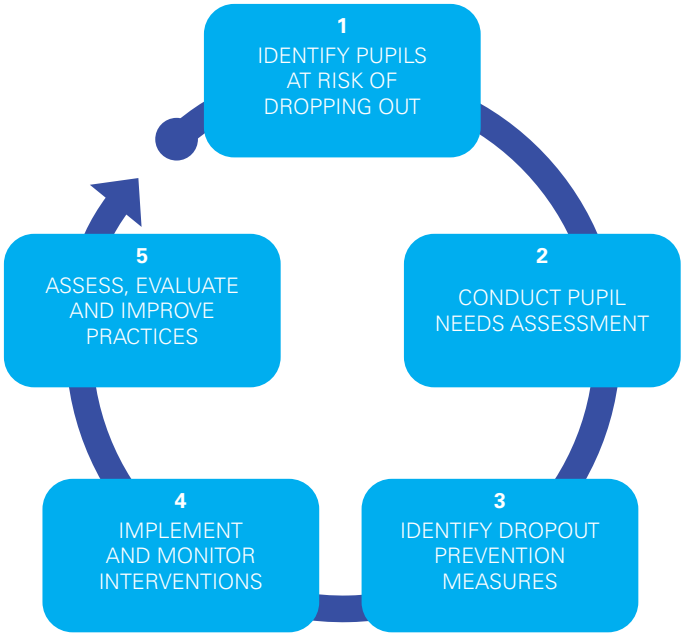


Figure 1. The 5 steps of dropout prevention

2 Early leavers from education and training | link

STEP 1 Identify Pupils at Risk of Dropout

The first step in dropout prevention is to understand the trends in dropout risk, the profiles of the young people who are dropping out from your school and the reasons why they might not complete their education.

This knowledge and understanding will help you recognise dropout risk factors and identify pupils who might be at risk of dropping out in your school.

Tool 1: Identify young people at risk of dropping out in your school

1 Looking back over the last five years, recall the pupils who dropped out from your school.

a. What has been the profile of pupils dropping out from your school? Consider their age, sex, ethnicity, grade, education stream, family circumstances, personal circumstances…

b. Why have pupils dropped from school over the past five years? Identify the main categories of reasons for dropout for each pupil.

c. When did they dropped out? (In the first few weeks of the year? At the end of a school year? During the summer? During a work placement?)

2 Who are the pupils currently at risk of dropping out in your school?

a. Why are they considered at risk of dropping out? Identify the main categories of dropout risk factors.

b. What is the profile? (Consider their age, sex, ethnicity, grade, education stream, family circumstances, personal circumstances…).

c. When might they dropout? (In the first few weeks of the year? At the end of a school year? During the summer? During a work placement?)

3 Analyse the data from Questions 1 and 2. What trends are emerging regarding the profile of pupils at risk of dropping out? What trends are emerging regarding the dropout risk factors in your school?

In many European countries, Ministries of Education have set up Early Warning Systems that enable schools and local authorities to identify pupils at risk of dropping out based on a small number of risk factors and predictors of dropout. Where pupil level data is accessible electronically, Early Warning Systems can be automated. In other contexts, some schools implement early warning systems manually.

Early Warning Systems are all based on dropout risk factors, such as:

- Absenteeism and truancy
- Academic performance
- Behaviour
- Overage by 2 years compared to peers
- Disability, illness or mental health conditions
- Specific personal circumstances, such as conflict with the law, unaccompanied minor refugee status, being a carer for siblings or a family relative with disability or illness, pregnancy or parenthood, marriage, child protection concerns (neglect or abuse)
- Specific family circumstances
- Low self-confidence

- Low sense of belonging
- Experience of bullying
- Inadequate education stream/orientation.

The Ministry of Education in Slovakia aims to create an early warning system that identifies pupils at risk of dropping out of school and provides them with the necessary support. More information can be found on the NP PUŠD page of VUDPaP's website.[3]

In the meantime, schools can reflect on cases of dropout in their contexts to better understand and anticipate dropout risks and implement supportive measures to help pupils remain in school and complete their education.

PROFILING PUPILS AT RISK OF DROPPING OUT IN SLOVAKIA

Below are some examples of young people at risk of dropping out in Slovakia, which have been identified based on real-life situations shared by schools in Slovakia.

Profile 1: Ana

Ana is 16 years old Ukrainian girl. She arrived in Slovakia in spring 2024 with both parents. In June 2024, she successfully passed the high school entrance exam for which she had prepared with a private tutor. Ana starts school in September. After a few weeks, the homeroom teacher notices that Ana is particularly quiet, participating little in class, and not engaging with peers, including other Ukrainian students. Ana is very good at math and is always submitting schoolwork on time. The homeroom teacher, however, is concerned about some signs of stigmatisation from some of her peers and about some teachers not paying attention to her due to her lack of engagement.

Profile 2: Peter

Peter is in year 3 of vocational education (mechanical stream) and is 17 years old. His father died and he lives with his stepmother who has younger children from a previous relationship. Peter is pressured to contribute to the household income, and he works on a part time basis, 3 to 4 times a week, taking on day or night shifts in factories. Peter is often absent from school and, when he attends, he is usually tired and sleepy. He faces expulsion from school for irregular attendance.. Peter is a very good mechanic, but has few opportunities to develop his skills due to his erratic attendance and limited engagement in schoolwork. He is stressed by the tension between his home duties including earning and income and looking after his young siblings, and the school requirements of attendance and performance. He feels that nobody understands his situation and that he doesn't belong, as he has very little time to build friendship and perceives that the school rejects him.

Profile 3: Hortenzia

Hortenzia is 17 and in Year 2 of upper secondary. She comes from a large size family of 11 siblings. Her parents work for the municipality and earn a very low wage. Hortenzia is responsible for the care of her siblings, and she is pregnant. She is often absent from school due to her care duties but has good craft skills and is motivated to learn. Although determined and having a strong social network of peers, she has started feeling stigmatised by teachers and classmates due to her pregnancy and wants to dropout from school.

Profile 4: Jan

Jan is 16 years old attending the first year of vocational secondary education in a school that is far away from his home. Jan is from a socially disadvantaged background and

3 Creation and verification of an early warning system to prevent dropout and targeted support for pupils in the counselling and prevention system | link

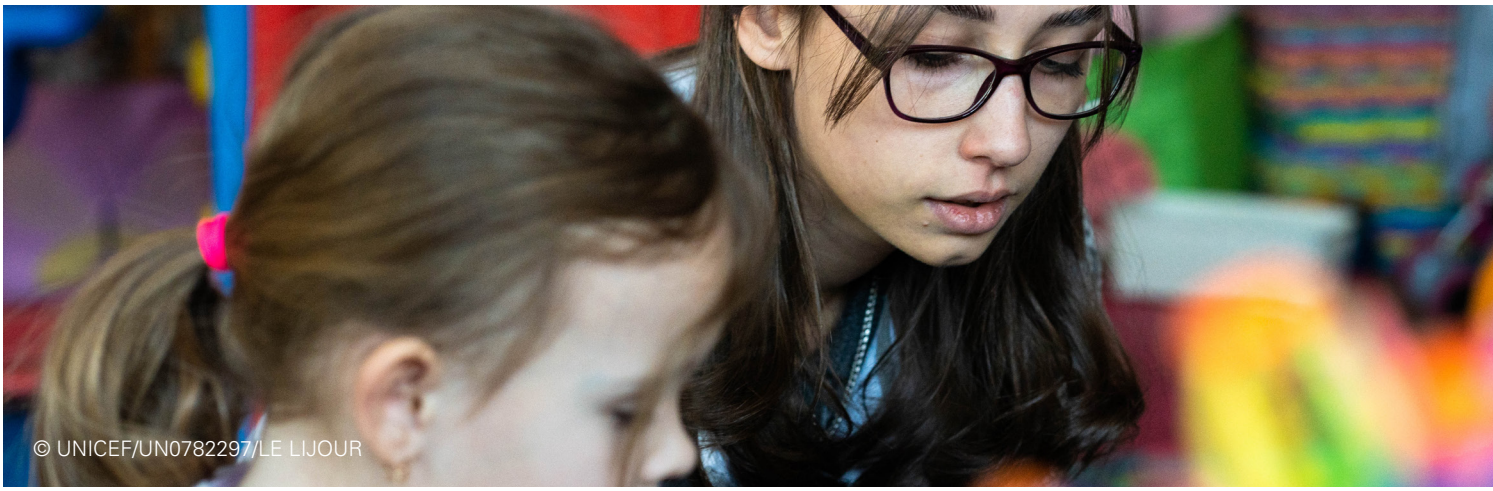
has five young siblings. His father earns a very small wage, and his mother is on maternity leave. Jan's family cannot afford the school's boarding facility and struggles to pay for school transport, school supplies, or the internet which is necessary for schoolwork.
Jan is frequently absent from school, leading to expulsions. His academic underperformance resulted in a class repetition. Jan feels depressed by his situation and is anxious about his future. His attendance is constrained by his family requiring help for chores and caring for his siblings and by lack of funds to pay for school transport. His academic engagement is constrained by lack of supplies and no internet. He is an excellent dancer but does not have the time or financial means for a hobby.

Profile 5: Anton

Anton, a 16 years old Ukrainian, enrolled in the first year of a technical secondary school with a boarding facility. He came to Slovakia without his parents, through an intermediary agency paid by his parents. An unaccompanied minor, Anton was appointed a guardian. His guardian is not always available, which creates obstacles for Anton's pupil and boarding pupil life when school matters require the consent of a legal representative.
Anton is finishing Ukrainian secondary school online. He is skipping Slovak school hours to work. Additionally, burdened by his Ukrainian studies, he is disengaging from Slovak education and his academic results suffer. Anton, who is well integrated in the school and boarding facility, told his Slovak peers that he planned to dropout from the Slovak education system once he successfully completes Ukrainian education to enrol in a local university. Anton's teachers are concerned that his lack of maturity will prevent him from starting Slovak university on the right foot.

Profile 6: Kevin

Kevin is in primary school, he is 14 years old and in Grade 6. Kevin comes from a marginalised Roma community. His father has taken a long-term job in England with his older brother. With remittances, his mother, who stays at home with his little sister, is financially secure. There is domestic violence in the family. Kevin's dad has been physically violent towards his mother on multiple occasions and Kevin has demonstrated some brutal gesture towards her too. Kevin has a business mindset and is dealing drugs, among other petty crime ventures and he is known of the local police. Authoritarian in nature, his peers follow him based on fear rather than genuine leadership qualities, and he has been aggressive towards school staff and classmates.
Kevin is often absent from school, but never to the point of being expelled, and he has some learning difficulty.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COMMON DROPOUT RISK FACTORS IN SLOVAKIA

Here is a summary of the dropout risk factors identified in the profile of the six pupils above.

Table 1. Summary of dropout risk factors from six profiles of pupils at risk of dropping out

Dropout risk factors		
Ana	**Peter**	**Hortenzia**
• Refugee young girl with Slovak as a second language • Withdrawn and isolated • Stigmatisation and bullying • Disengagement of some teachers	• Orphan, living with step-mother • Working to generate income, including night shifts • Caring responsibilities for younger siblings • School absenteeism • School exclusion • Low school engagement and performance • Feeling of not belonging, not being supported • Limited peer network	• Large size family • Caring responsibilities for younger siblings • Early pregnancy • School absenteeism • Stigmatisation from some peers and teachers
Jan	**Anton**	**Kevin**
• Poverty negatively impacting on school transport and supplies • Absenteeism • Expulsions • Low performance • Caring and chores responsibilities	• Unaccompanied minor • Limited availability of legal guardian • School work burden from two education systems • Low performance in Slovak system • Maturity level to enter university	• Overage for his year • Marginalisation and poverty • Father living abroad • Domestic violence • Petty crime • Learning difficulty • Aggressive behaviour at school

STEP 2 Conduct Pupil Needs Assessment

Once pupils at risk of dropping out have been identified, the next step is to understand the specific needs and barriers to education and learning of each pupil to be able to devise appropriate measures.

PUPIL NEEDS AND STRENGTHS ASSESSMENT

Once pupils at risk of dropping out are identified, information regarding the reasons for disengagement or dropout risk are necessary for school staff to provide relevant support interventions.

Needs and strengths assessments and informal discussions with pupils and families are best kept simple and address the following questions:

1. What are the barriers to school attendance and learning?
2. What are the underlying factors affecting poor attendance, low academic performance, poor behaviour and how personal or family circumstances affect the student's education.
3. What are the current efforts/strategies of pupils and families to improve attendance, learning and engagement?
4. What are the pupil's strengths and interests, as well as protective factors that will increase resilience, education achievement and reduce the risk of dropout?
5. What can be done to help the pupil re-engage in learning and return/remain in school? (by the school or other stakeholders including families, peers, external services)?


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6. Is the pupil at risk of neglect, abuse or violence? Does the situation require a referral to the child protection or the social and youth services?

Needs assessment can be conducted by the homeroom teacher, a school psychologist, a special or social pedagogue, a career counsellor, another member of the school support team, or a combination of the above. Ensuring that sensitive information is handled appropriately and protected during the process is critical.

The needs assessment can be done more or less formally, depending on staff time through:

- Examination of the pupil's school file;
- Discussions with the pupil and his/her family. This can be done at school or during a home visit;
- Discussions with other relevant stakeholders (teachers, including teachers from previous years, school staff and external staff involved in learning support with the pupil, sports coaches, social services, mediators, NGOs, local authorities, etc.);

- Needs assessment forms developed by the school; and
- Additional psychometric tests to gain a deeper understanding of pupils' wellbeing, sense of belonging to the school, and overall education and school experience.

Dropout risks and reasons for absences or disengagement from education can be complex and perceived differently by different stakeholders.

Gathering and triangulating information from several sources is therefore critical to understanding these different perspectives. When working with families, consider the different perceptions of the father and the mother.

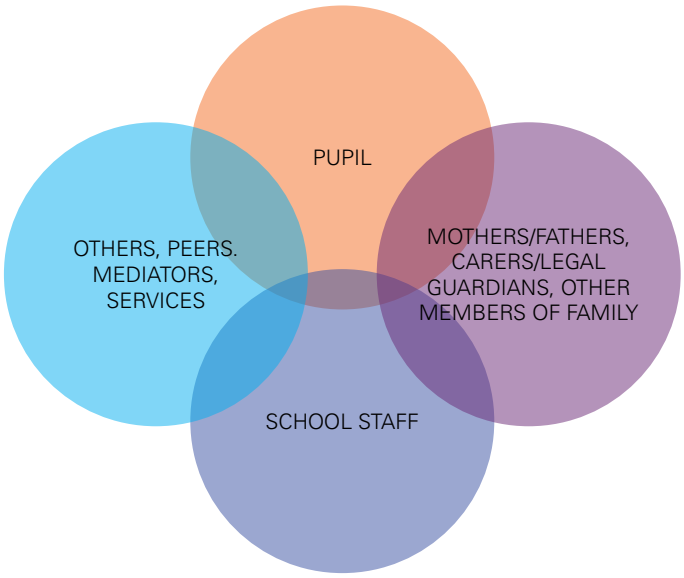

Figure 2. Perspectives of various stakeholders on dropout risk factors

Tool 2: Needs assessment and information gathering from pupils at risk and their families

	DIMENSIONS	INFORMATION GATHERED BY THE SCHOOL ON CHALLENGES AND STRENGTHS
1	Household characteristics and issues faced by the family impacting on dropout risk	
2	Main barriers to school regular attendance, school engagement and performance	
3	Main strengths of the family (what works well in this family and provides a supportive environment for the pupil?)	
4	Efforts deployed by the family to support the pupil attend school regularly, remain and succeed in education	
5	Main issues faced by the pupil in their life and at school	
6	Main strengths, talents and interests of the pupil	
7	Efforts deployed by the pupil to attend school regularly and engage in learning	

Areas to explore when identifying families' issues and strengths:

- Household demographics
- Employment
- Finances
- Housing situation
- Relationships within the family
- Parenting skills
- Family support network
- Significant events that impacted the family
- Social relationships and perceived discrimination
- Engagement with the schools and other social services

Examples of issues faced by pupils:

- Physical and mental health
- Disability and/or special educational needs
- Family relationships
- Peer support network
- Social engagement
- Education engagement
- Education performance
- Significant events that have impacted the pupil, including trauma and adverse childhood experience
- Negative school experience
- Discrimination and bullying

Examples of pupils' strengths, talents, and interests:

- Personal traits and skills
- Family relationships
- Peer support network
- Social engagement
- Education engagement and performance
- Areas of interest, talents
- Life and career aspirations

Examples of needs and strengths assessment

Here is an example of needs and strengths assessment based on the profile of **Jan**.

Table 2. Example of needs and strengths assessment

	DIMENSIONS	INFORMATION GATHERED BY THE SCHOOL ON CHALLENGES AND STRENGTHS
1	Household characteristics and issues faced by the family impacting on dropout risk	*Socially disadvantaged family, low income. Large size family.*
2	Main barriers to school regular attendance, school engagement and performance	*Lack of money to pay for school transport and supplies. Caring responsibilities and home chores hamper attendance. Learning and performance undermined by lack of school supplies and internet.*
3	Main strengths of the family (what works well in this family and provides a supportive environment for the pupil?)	*Father in employment. [Additional information required from the parents or the pupil]*
4	Efforts deployed by the family to support the pupil attend school regularly, remain and succeed in education	*[Additional information required from the parents or the pupil]*
5	Main issues faced by the pupil in their life and at school	*School absenteeism. School expulsion. Low performance at school. | Feeling depressed and anxious.*
6	Main strengths, talents and interests of the pupil	*Dance skills.*
7	Efforts deployed by the pupil to attend school regularly and engage in learning	*[Additional information required from the parents or the pupil]*

Listen to the voices of Ukrainian young people in Slovakia on their struggles to be included in schools and communities: | link

STEP 3 Identify Dropout Prevention Measures

A whole school approach to dropout prevention ensures that the school embeds dropout prevention in every aspect of its work, while also providing additional support to students at risk of dropping out through targeted and individual dropout prevention measures.

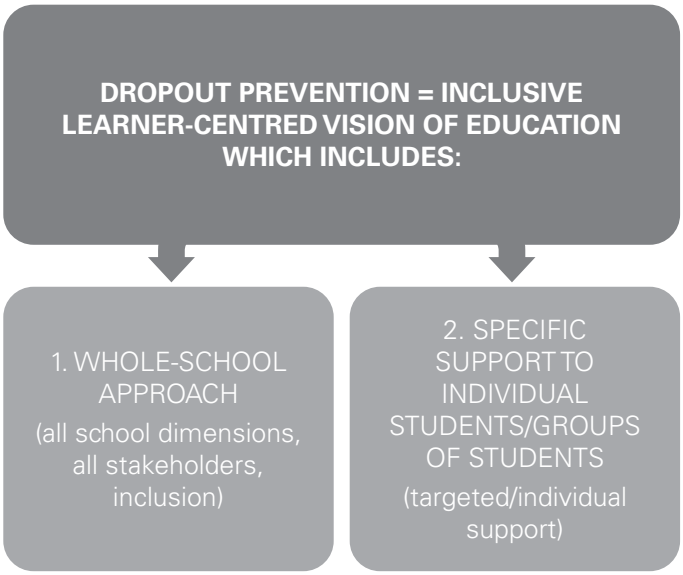

Figure 3. Holistic approach to dropout prevention

PRINCIPLES FOR A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH TO DROPOUT PREVENTION

A whole-school approach to inclusive dropout prevention support spans several interlinked areas. Dropout prevention is most effective when it is embedded in all domains of the school life, i.e. the school structure, governance and management, the classroom, and the interactions with and role of students, parents and families, external agencies and broader community groups.

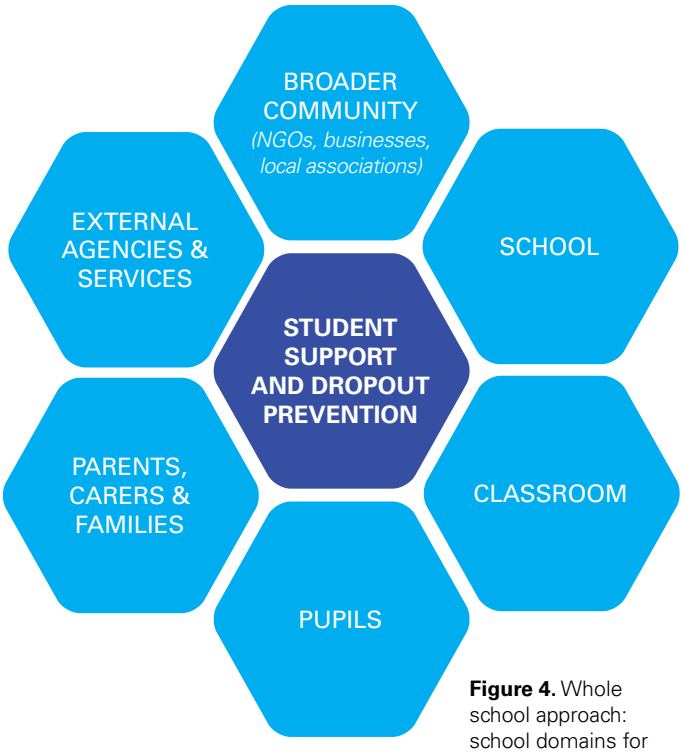

Figure 4. Whole school approach: school domains for dropout prevention

Figure 4 Source: Adapted from Lavrentsova and Valkov (2017)

More specifically, each domain relates to dropout and dropout prevention as follows:

AREAS	DESCRIPTION
School	Main responsibility of: the school leadership and management. Covers: (i) inclusive and supportive school ethos and policies, (ii) leadership, (iii) management, (iv) school planning, (v) staffing and professional development, (vi) school environment and climate, (vii) collaboration with municipalities, external services and the community.
Classroom	Main responsibility of: teachers. Related to teacher work, classroom organization and teaching and learning practices: (i) curriculum delivery, (ii) inclusive teaching and learning practices, including differentiated instruction and personalised learning, (iii) learning support, (iv) skills development, (v) motivation for learning.
Pupils	Main responsibility of: school staff and pupils Related to (i) school connectedness and sense of belonging to the school, (ii) wellbeing, (iii) socio-emotional skills development, (iv) Student Parliaments' and pupils' involvement in and support to dropout prevention interventions, such as flagging peers facing difficulties, peer mentoring, etc.)
Parents	Main responsibility of: school staff and parents Related to (i) school strategies to engage parents in school activities, (ii) school-family communication strategies, (iii) strategies to support parents engage in the learning of their children, (iv) collaborating effectively with parents of pupils at risk of dropping out.
External agencies & services	Main responsibility of: school staff, municipalities, and external services Related to multi-agency coordination, including (i) referral procedures to external support (e.g. child protection, health, police, municipality, CPP…), (ii) joint interventions for dropout prevention.
Broader community	Main responsibility of: school staff, civil society, municipalities Related to: (i) developing partnerships between the school, civil society organisations, youth associations and employers/businesses, (ii) collaboration with community leaders and church and religious representatives.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH EXTERNAL SERVICES AND THE COMMUNITY

A key aspect of dropout prevention is about being innovative and creative with the partnerships that schools can build with other organisations to involve them in addressing dropout risks.

These partnerships might aim to support the school, the pupils at risk of dropping out, or their families.

External services (child protection, social services, health services, municipalities, youth services, job centres), civil society organisations and businesses can play a role in dropout prevention, but they are rarely required to do so by schools.

WHAT CAN EMPLOYERS, ENTREPRENEURS, BUSINESSES AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS DO FOR DROPOUT PREVENTION?

- Provision of scholarships
- Donations such as books, vocational education materials and equipment, IT devices…
- Fundraising to sponsor a child or disadvantaged pupils in general (e.g., scholarships, school transport, IT devices, mobile phones and Internet credit)
- Mentoring of young people throughout upper secondary and transition to employment
- Internships and job placements
- Career guidance contribution
- Talks and seminars in schools on transition to employment, job markets and job applications, skills development, etc…

THREE-TIER APPROACH TO DROPOUT PREVENTION

While every student requires some level of support throughout their school education, some encounter greater barriers and need more support than others. The challenge for schools is to address the basic needs of all students to participate in and complete education while also responding to the specific needs or barriers of those who are most at risk of learning disengagement and dropping out.


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The **three-tier approach**[4] to dropout prevention categorizes interventions by **level of intensity** for specific groups:

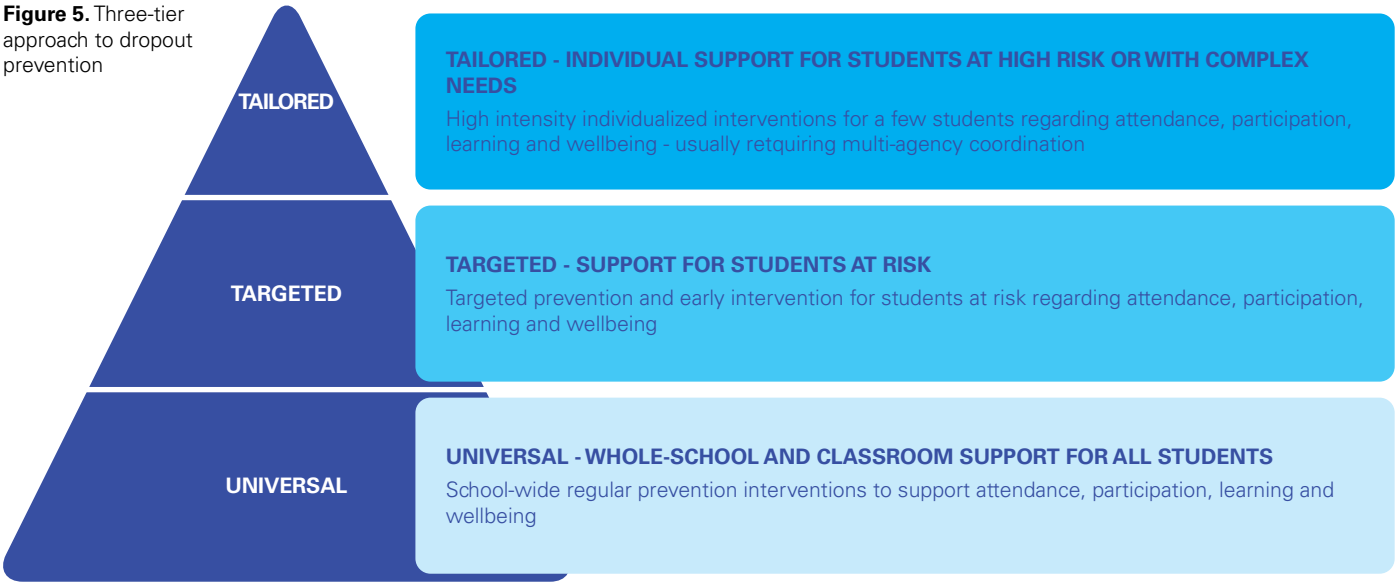
- **Universal** interventions, for all pupils and benefiting the whole-school community,
- **Targeted** interventions, for pupils at risk requiring additional support, and
- **Tailored** interventions, for individuals at very high risk of dropping out requiring highly intensive and individualized cross-sectoral support.

Universal interventions support the basic attendance, behaviour, academic and socio-emotional wellbeing needs of all students to support their participation in and completion of education and require a low level of resources (time, funds and human resources), as interventions are mainstreamed. This allows for the allocation of more resources to fewer students requiring additional or individualized interventions for participating in and completing their education.

Adopting a three-tier approach to student support and dropout prevention is a cornerstone of inclusive education.

4 This is loosely based on Response-to-Intervention, a multi-tier approach developed in the USA for the early identification and support of students with learning and behaviour needs (see link for more information). Variations of this model have since been developed and used across the world in all sectors, particularly social assistance and services and education.

Figure 5. Three-tier approach to dropout prevention



If possible, schools should embed dropout prevention in the regular practices that address all students (**universal**). These are less costly than targeted or tailored interventions and include automatic notification of unauthorised absences to parents and children on the day they are absent, school attendance policies, learning support in the classroom for low-achievers, anti-bullying policies, participation of students in decision-making processes and extra-curricular activities.

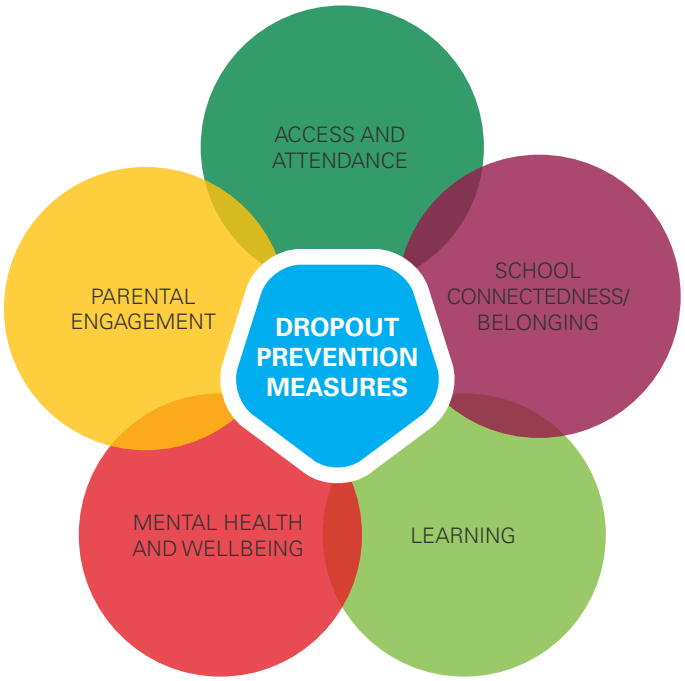
For some groups of pupils, **targeted** measures are required, such as a **protocol to welcome refugee children and parents in schools** (see Annex 4 for an example), **additional classes for Slovak as a second language, support to transition between primary and secondary**, or **mentoring** pupils at risk of dropping out.

For students facing the most complex situations, **tailored** individual and intensive support is necessary, such as one-to-one additional teaching, an individual plan to tackle dropout risks from multiple angles and to coordinate the provision of multiple support services, within and outside school.

Figure 5 Source: Adapted from UNICEF (2017) and Eire Department of Education (2021)

MEASURES FOR DROPOUT PREVENTION AND EARLY RESPONSE

Dropout prevention measures vary depending on pupils' needs. They mostly fall under five categories:



ABSENTEEISM MANAGEMENT

- Regular monitoring of absenteeism and tardiness
- Automatic SMS to notify parents and students as soon as an absence occurs
- Systematic call to parents when child is absent
- Greeting children by name every day
- Follow-up on chronic absenteeism with child, parents, and community members
- 'Welcome back' strategies for absent students (e.g. sharing lessons' notes, catching up with homework, peer mentoring for learning support, etc)
- Targeted support for adolescent girls, particularly pregnant girls and young mothers, and for young fathers

ATTENDANCE SUPPORT

- Access to social benefits, disability allowance, housing benefits, unemployment benefits, cash transfer and voucher programmes
- Scholarships for secondary and vocational education (from the State, municipality, or a private sponsor – individual or business)
- One-off secondary school enrolment allowances (when entering Year 1 of secondary)
- Free or concessionary school transport (from the municipality, a sponsor or transport companies)
- Free school meals/breakfasts
- Free textbooks, school and vocational education supplies and equipment
- Free IT devices/connectivity (incl. partnering with IT networks)
- IT devices loan schemes
- Referral to NGOs/local services for accessing financial services
- Provision of information to young people (and/or their parents) about organisations engaged in socio-economic support (job centres, career centres, municipality services, social services, NGOs, etc.)
- School fundraising activities (clothes, school supplies, IT devices, food, education supplies…)

Learn from a Buddy Programme experience in Slovakia

Stredná priemyselná škola dopravná Košice | LINK

SCHOOL CONNECTEDNESS (WITH PEERS, TEACHERS, SCHOOL STAFF)

- Ensure that marginalised pupils and those at risk of dropping out participate in sports and other extra-curricular activities
- Organisation of pupil-led activities, i.e. activities that are designed and implemented by pupils for pupils, including by and for pupils at risk of dropping out
- Participation of disadvantaged pupils and pupils at risk otf dropping out in Students' Parliament
- Inviting pupil at risk of dropping out to take leadership position, such as leading a peer-group activity, a school club or a school project and selecting them as mentors or tutors for younger pupils
- Pupils at risk of dropping out and disadvantaged pupils participate in
  - (i) Entrepreneurship projects that enable them to work collaboratively and innovatively on concrete school or community problems, propose solutions and make a difference
  - (ii) Projects linking the school to the local community, the workplace or the wider world, to increase engagement and motivation in learning.
- The school provides opportunities for teachers and pupils to bond informally through days out, etc.
- Pupils are invited to voice their views about the school climate and the quality of teaching and care at school
- Mentoring by school staff or teachers
- Anti-bullying and fighting stereotypes and prejudices
- After school cultural and social integration club, for refugee children to better understand the Slovak culture, and for all pupils to develop intercultural skills

LEARNING SUPPORT

- Teachers discuss with at risk pupils to understand how they learn better, what their strengths and interests are, set achievable learning goals to build their self-esteem and review progress.
- Regular learning monitoring and discussion of progress and strategies to overcome challenges with pupils, parents and mentors.
- Study skills support in class or workshops (e.g. time management, organisation skills, homework management skills, exam revision skills, presentation skills, how to learn best, etc.)
- Subject-specific remedial classes (e.g. additional small group teaching)
- Individual 1:1 tutoring (provided at school or in the community, by NGOs)
- After school learning support such as study groups or homework clubs at school, in youth associations, or community organisations or NGOs.
- Extra learning support around examination time (organised by schools, by NGOs, local groups, municipalities, etc)
- Peer study groups (student-led or led by the school or municipalities/NGOs)
- Peer tutoring (from peers in higher grades or mastering specific subjects)
- Individual learning plans
- Involving pupils in devising, planning and monitoring their own learning (e.g. pupils have choice over learning activities; project-based learning and peer group learning)
- Providing alternative assessment options, such as portfolios with professional experiences and concrete realisations/products for increased motivation, linking assessment with real life or the world of work
- Providing tips and strategies to parents so they can support their children's learning at home

MOTIVATION FOR LEARNING

- Engaging pupils at risk in personal learning projects related to their career aspirations, talents or areas of interest
- Employability skills development workshops
- Organisation of an entrepreneur club at school
- Linking at risk pupils with former alumni or professionals and entrepreneurs working in industries that interest them
- Career guidance and developing a career plan/goals
- Support at risk pupils to find work placements, summer jobs, internships, apprenticeships
- Providing parental guidance on how to support learning and virtuous studying habits at home

SLOVAK AS A SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING SUPPORT:

- Class teachers, language teachers an adaptation class teachers devise common strategies or a plan to support pupils with specific language needs
- Provision of reasonable accommodation for T5 and T9
- After school language club
- Teachers use differentiated pedagogy and personalised learning to accommodate pupils' learning needs
- Teachers assess separately concept/subject knowledge and language knowledge
- Teachers differentiate assessments to enable non-native speakers to demonstrate their learning of the subject regardless of their level of Slovak
- Organisation of family learning events to promote Slovak language learning (e.g. reading in Slovak activities for parents and their children in the school library)
- Teachers provide advice and tips for parents/carers to accelerate Slovak language learning for their children
- Teachers provide strategies and learning materials for parents/carers to support their child at home

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING (AT SCHOOL LEVEL)

- Teacher professional development to improve awareness of (i) issues affecting refugee children, (ii) unconscious bias towards disadvantaged children and those at risk of dropping out
- Identifying and signalling pupils with mental health (e.g. anxiety) or protection risks (e.g. early marriage, abuse and violence)
- Morning circles
- Adapted timetables
- Psychological support in school: 'drop-in sessions' during and after school hours, small group psychological/ pedagogical/counselling support
- Clear school system for teachers to monitor, flag signs of mental health and wellbeing issues, and refer pupils to the School Support Team, and, when needed, to external psychological and other support (e.g: CPP)
- Promoting a culture of seeking help
- Mentoring

WELLBEING AT CLASSROOM LEVEL
(not a comprehensive list!)

- Caring, inclusive, welcoming and supportive classrooms
- Positive discipline
- Positive relationship building (teacher – pupils and peer to peer)
- Socio-emotional skills development (managing emotions, stress, decision-making, goal setting, managing conflict, team work, coping skills and resilience…)
- Positive modelling of dealing with stress
- Classroom rituals, such as: Morning and evening routines in primary school; Welcoming and saying goodbye to peers on the move; Weekly/daily check-in and checkout; Rose/Thorn/ Rosebud technique[5]…)
- Safe/quiet space in the school/class to withdraw/recharge/ get support

5 The rose represents successes – ask "What's going well?" or "What went well?". The thorn represents challenges – ask "What's not working?" or "What was challenging?". The bud represents potential and hope– ask "What gives you hope?" or "What could you try?" or "What's inspiring you right now?".

MEETING WITH PARENTS AND CARERS

- Provide necessary support for parents to attend school meetings, such as:
  - Interpretation
- NIVAM Regional Coordinators for Ukrainian refugees[6], social workers, cultural or Roma mediators, or psychologists.
- Parents/carers are invited to individual meetings with school management, support team or teachers to discuss the achievements and challenges of their children, progress and solutions to overcome problems, and any support plan the school might develop for their child.
- Conducting home visits
- Strategies for engaging with hard-to-reach parents, or parents abroad are deployed, such as:
  - Remote communication when face-to-face meetings are not possible
  - Working with influential community members (mediators, community leaders, Church leaders, other parents) to establish trust between parents and the school
  - Activities to engage fathers in the life of the school

PROVISION OF PARENTAL SUPPORT

- Parental guidance on education system, pathways, career education and support to help their children's decision making regarding their education and training path
- Parental guidance on how to support Slovak language learning at home
- Parental guidance on how to support homework and studying at home
- Parental information on how to access municipality and community services (health, social services, unemployment support, etc.)
- Parental guidance/workshops on child development, trauma, and adolescent psychology
- Provision of or referral for parent psychological support
- Morning coffees for parents
- Creating or facilitating access to parent and carer support groups and circles (e.g. Mothers group, Ukrainian carers group, grandparents group, etc)

PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT IN SCHOOL (GENERIC)

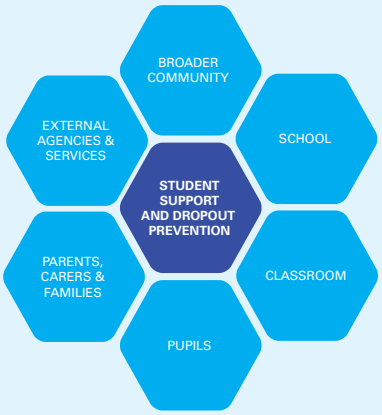
- Organisation of family learning activities in schools (e.g. reading together, cultural days…)
- Opportunities for participation and active encouragement to participate in: (i) school activities (learning, culture, art); (ii) to voice opinions, concerns, suggestions, (iii) to join other parents in parent engagement activities such as parenting workshops, cultural events, morning coffees for parents...)

6 Contact information can be found here: link

Tool 3: Supporting pupils holistically

In a whole-school approach, schools support pupils at risk of dropping out and welcome, include and support pupils from refugee and migrant, Roma, and disability background, by combining interventions at different levels and on different domains.

Level of intervention



Domain of intervention

When identifying interventions to support pupils at risk ask the following questions:

1. Have we identified interventions at each level?
2. Have we identified interventions for each relevant domain?

In Step 4 below, you will find examples of interventions across levels and domains developed by Slovak educators to respond to various pupil profiles.

STEP 4 Implement and Monitor Dropout Prevention Measures

Implementing dropout measures requires a certain level of planning, coordination, and monitoring. Schools are encouraged to develop mechanisms to follow pupils at risk, track progress and review approaches and adjust measures when necessary.

The School Support Team, where it exists, is best placed to plan and coordinate the dropout prevention measures devised for pupils at risk of dropping out. Schools are encouraged to use a simple case management approach, whereby one adult is nominated to follow one pupil at risk of dropping out (see below).

Schools can use a simple pupil dropout prevention plan to organise and coordinate their support (see below).

ABOUT CASE MANAGEMENT

Case management is an approach aimed to address the needs of a pupil in a holistic manner, coordinating prevention and response interventions when there is a dropout risk:

- *Case:* the pupil in need of support
- *Management:* organised procedures and mechanisms

In dropout prevention, **case management aims to**:

- Ensure that the views, needs and participation of the pupil and his/her family is at the core of the interventions;
- Oversee the needs assessment process (see Step 2 above)
- Coordinate, record and monitor activities to prevent and respond to dropout risk undertaken by the school;
- Identify and mobilise the necessary resources inside and outside the school to support the pupil;
- Bring together professionals from all sectors and informal networks (e.g. peers, community) to support the child holistically when necessary.

A case management process involves:

- A case manager
- A support network (e.g. a School Support Team, teachers, parents/family members, youth workers, peers, other members of the community as relevant)

The role of the Case managers typically involves:

- Being the focal point for the family and all professionals working with the pupil;
- Liaising with the pupil and the family to assess needs and explore solutions;
- Organising meetings with all parties concerned to identify dropout interventions;
- Developing, with the help of the School Support Team, a Pupil Dropout Prevention Plan;
- Monitoring the progress of activities;
- Calling meetings with all parties concerned to review key indicators, review the effectiveness of dropout prevention measures, and plan next steps;
- Referring cases of pupils to the principal for an official referral, for instance in case of abuse or neglect.

While the case manager coordinates activities for a case, **they are not the sole person responsible for decision-making**, monitoring and progress reviews. These must be undertaken with other members of the School Support Team and class teachers, and/or the community when relevant, jointly with the pupil and their parents.

Selection of case managers:

Case managers can be any school professional. Schools are encouraged to select case managers based on their ability to work with pupils and families, and to ensure that case managers are not overburdened by cases.

Case managers would be best selected from the School Support Team first. Schools with high numbers of pupils at risk of dropping out might also nominate other teachers as case managers. School principals would ensure that no staff is case manager for more than three pupils at a time.

INDIVIDUAL DROPOUT PREVENTION PLANS

Pupil Dropout Prevention Plans are useful tools to record and coordinate actions taken by the school to return a child to school and prevent dropout. A simple plan would include information on:

- The pupil's **dropout risk factors**, based on the needs assessment , and available evidence on attendance, learning, behaviour and personal circumstances;
- **Protective factors** and strengths which could help the pupil to remain at school, such as interests, talents, social networks, emotional maturity, motivation and other strengths;
- **Actions to be taken, when and by whom:** interventions that will be implemented by the school, parents, the pupil and external school stakeholders whenever relevant, e.g. teachers, psychologists, parents, municipality representatives, education authorities;
- **Progress monitoring** – reviewing implementation of measures and assessing progress overtime, evaluating results, and;
- **Closing the case** when no more support is required, for instance, when the pupil is back on track and the dropout risk is managed, the pupil has completed their education or transferred to another school.

Tool 4: Planning and monitoring dropout prevention interventions

Good planning and monitoring require schools to ask the following questions:

1. **What** activities will we implement to prevent this pupil from dropping out?
2. **Who** will be implementing each activity?
3. **When** will each activity be implemented?
4. **How** will we review and assess progress?

INDIVIDUAL DROPOUT PREVENTION INTERVENTIONS

What? (Description of the intervention measures)	**Who?**	**When?**	**Comments** (on implementation, resources needed)	**Progress review** (signs of progress, adjustments to measures)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WORDS FROM SCHOOL STAFF ABOUT DROPOUT PREVENTION:

“ There is always something we can do, even a little thing.

“ It’s important to empower pupils and help them to help themselves.

“ Understanding the perspective of pupils and young people is key. We need to listen more.

Individual Pupil Dropout Prevention Plans work best when parents and pupils are involved in their development and have contributed their own solutions and committed to implementing specific activities to reduce the dropout risk.

Actively involving pupils in the planning for their return to school/preventing dropout will help build a sense of belonging and connection.

The implementation of individual dropout prevention measures requires **time and resources**. Schools, including School Support Teams and case managers, are encouraged to prioritise interventions with the highest possible impact where resources constraints are high. A useful strategy is to spread responsibility for specific measures across school staff to avoid burden and to ensure that both, teachers and non-teaching staff, are taking responsibility for supporting pupils at risk of dropping out.

Filling forms can be time consuming for teachers. Schools are invited to find the strategies that work for them and their teams, so as to keep the administrative burden to a minimum.

A **Pupil Dropout Plan Template** can be found in Annex 5.

EFFECTIVENESS CRITERIA FOR IMPLEMENTING DROPOUT PREVENTION MEASURES

Research shows that pupil specific dropout prevention measures are most effective when:

- They are **based on the individual specific needs of pupils.**
- They are holistic, **addressing pupils’ issues and dropout risks from different angles.**
- They are timely and **implemented as early as possible.**
- They are **applied consistently by all parties** concerned.
- They are delivered over a **sufficiently long period of time.**
- They are **decided jointly and in agreement with the pupil and their family.**
- They **build on the strengths** of families and strengths, **interests and potential** of the pupil.
- They are **coordinated**, across school staff, external agencies and the community.
- They are monitored to **review what is working**, what is not working and inform the school dropout intervention practices.

Examples of dropout measures for young people at risk of dropping out of school

Below are concrete examples of interventions that schools could take to support pupils at risk of dropping out based on their needs and profile. These examples were developed by Slovak schools. The proposed interventions aim to inspire schools and to demonstrate that a wide range of activities can be implemented by schools and other stakeholders in dropout prevention.

The number and type of interventions depend on the profile of the pupil, and on the time and resources available at school level. It is not expected that schools would implement all of the activities mentioned below.

Schools are encouraged to be creative and to engage pupils, parents, communities, civil society organisations and employers in their dropout work.

HOLISTIC DROPOUT PREVENTION SUPPORT FOR ANA

Profile 1: Ana

Ana is 16 years old Ukrainian girl. She arrived in Slovakia in spring 2024 with both parents. In June 2024, she successfully passed the high school entrance exam for which she had prepared with a private tutor. Ana starts school in September. After a few weeks, the homeroom teacher notices that Ana is particularly quiet, participating little in class, and not engaging with peers, including other Ukrainian pupils. Ana is very good at math and is always submitting schoolwork on time. The homeroom teacher, however, is concerned about some signs of stigmatisation from some of her peers and about some teachers not paying attention to her due to her lack of engagement.

INTERVENTIONS – SCHOOL LEVEL

School connectedness

Raising teachers' awareness: The homeroom teacher and the School Support Team will brief all teachers about Ana's situation and specific needs. Subject teachers will be encouraged to provide support on complex terminology. Additionally, when overwhelmed, Ana will place a blue cardboard on her desk so that teachers do not question her at that time. Conversely, teachers are encouraged to welcome Ana by name when she enters the class and to ask her questions when the blue card is not on her desk.

Organisation of a multi-cultural day: To strengthen cohesion among pupils, the school, together with the Students' Parliament, organises a multicultural day, showcasing Ukrainian and other cultures. Pupils, including Ana, are invited to contribute stories. Ana chooses to make a photo exhibition to share her experience of Ukrainian culture.

Learning

Discussing life goals: Ana discussed her future plans with the career counsellor.

Higher education paths: The career counsellor and the math teacher presented to Ana the options for higher education in Slovakia and abroad.

INTERVENTIONS – CLASSROOM LEVEL

School connectedness and wellbeing

Monthly check-ins with the homeroom teacher: Ana and the homeroom teacher will meet for 30 minutes the last Friday of every month to assess what went well in school, identify schoolwork or peer and teacher interaction challenges, and develop strategies to increase motivation and engagement in all subjects.

Morning circles: The school psychologist organises morning circles once a week with the whole class for a period of at least 3 months.

Awareness raising of peers: The homeroom teacher and the math teachers requested an intervention from the school psychologist and the Students' Parliament in Ana's class. This led to a series of group activities to support peers relationships and improve the classroom climate.

Learning

Math competition: Ana agrees to be included in the math Olympics by her math teacher.

HOLISTIC DROPOUT PREVENTION SUPPORT FOR ANA

INTERVENTIONS – PEER LEVEL

Mental health and wellbeing

Understanding Ana's withdrawn behaviour: Discussion with Ana and her parents to understand how she perceives the situation regarding her isolation in the class and her withdrawn attitude. Are there classes where she is withdrawn more than others? Is this a new behaviour since arriving in Slovakia?

Morning circle: The school social pedagogue will start a morning circle programme in the school for interested pupils. Ana is invited to join.

Weekly sessions with the school psychologist: Ana agreed to weekly sessions with the school psychologist. Sessions would focus on socialisation among other things.

School connectedness

Buddy program: The school will set up a buddy programme. Ana agreed to connect with another Ukrainian pupil under the programme. Ana explained that she would feel more comfortable with an older female pupil with an interest in math and science.

INTERVENTIONS – EXTERNAL SERVICES LEVEL

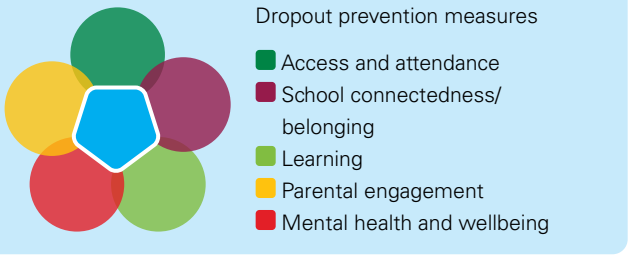
Addressing learning

Slovak language classes: Ana was referred to a language class organised by NIVAM to relieve her parents from the financial burden of private tutoring.

INTERVENTIONS – COMMUNITY LEVEL

Addressing parental engagement

Youth community activities: In discussion with the school psychologist, Ana's parents are invited to increase Ana's opportunities to socialise and engage with other adolescents. Ana's parents identify a refugee charity recruiting volunteers to run a homework club. Ana, alongside other Ukrainian secondary school pupils from across the municipality, will tutor primary school Ukrainian children in math and science.



HOLISTIC DROPOUT PREVENTION SUPPORT FOR PETER

Profile 2: Peter

Peter is in year 3 of vocational education (mechanical stream) and is 17 years old. His father died and he lives with his stepmother who has younger children from a previous relationship. Peter is pressured to contribute to the household income, and he works on a part time basis, 3 to 4 times a week, taking on day or night shifts in factories. Peter is often absent from school and, when he attends, he is usually tired and sleepy. The school expelled him several times irregular attendance.

Peter is a very good mechanic, but has few opportunities to develop his skills due to his erratic attendance and limited engagement in schoolwork. He is stressed by the tension between his home duties including earning and income and looking after his young siblings, and the school requirements of attendance and performance. He feels that nobody understands his situation and that he doesn't belong, as he has very little time to build friendship and perceives that the school rejects him.

INTERVENTIONS – SCHOOL LEVEL

Attendance and School connectedness

Organise a joint meeting with school management, support team members, the homeroom teacher and the head of the VET mechanic stream, to discuss Peter's situation and reflect on alternative measures to school exclusion that are supportive rather than punitive.

Learning

Develop an Education Individual Plan, including strategies to catch up on missed classes, and propose accommodation for exams.

Inform teachers of Peter's family situation.

Parental engagement

Meeting with Peter stepmother to discuss Peter's situation and to identify strategies to increase his attendance (see below "external services").

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Identify a trusted adult, jointly with Peter, with whom Peter could discuss his situation. By understanding Peter's side of the story, the trusted adult could communicate his concerns and needs with the school, teachers, the school support team and his stepmother.

Psychological counselling, to support Peter with his feeling of rejection from the school, to help him work through the perceived tensions in his life, to help him prioritise activities in his life. This would be done through active listening and helping Peter express his needs.

HOLISTIC DROPOUT PREVENTION SUPPORT PETER

INTERVENTIONS – CLASSROOM LEVEL

Learning

Teachers to provide course materials and catch up learning opportunities during class time. Encourage teachers to provide personalised learning to Peter for catching up on missed lessons. Encourage teachers to share lesson materials electronically so that Peter can catch up with lesson content more easily.

INTERVENTIONS – PEER LEVEL

School connectedness

Peer support: Involve peers in sharing class notes and other key information to Peter when he is absent from school.

INTERVENTIONS – PARENT LEVEL

Attendance

Parent contract: The school organises several meetings with Peter's step mother to advocate for the importance of finishing upper secondary so as to increase employment opportunities in the future. An agreement (verbal contract) is drawn with the step mother, whereby the school commits to supporting Peter and the step mother commits to reducing her demands on Peter for child care support.

INTERVENTIONS – EXTERNAL SERVICES LEVEL

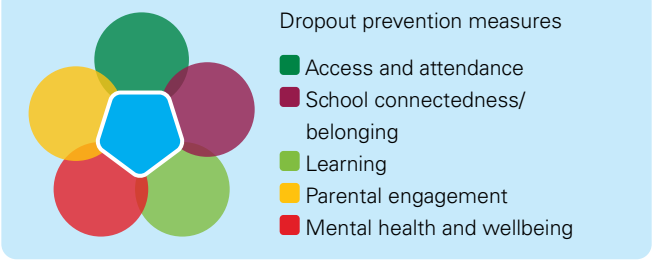
Parental engagement

Work with the municipality to identify potential financial support for Peter's family to alleviate the pressure for him to work. This might include a referral to social services, identifying a scholarship scheme for Peter, and a priority placement in kindergarten for young siblings.

INTERVENTIONS – COMMUNITY LEVEL

Attendance support

Work with employers and businesses: (i) discuss Peter's situation with his employer (factory) and identify whether his shifts could be changed to better fit with his school timetable; (ii) working with VET teachers from the mechanic stream, identify a garage in the local community who might be willing to offer an apprenticeship to Peter so that he can practice mechanic while earning some income; explore dual education opportunities for Peter.



HOLISTIC DROPOUT PREVENTION SUPPORT FOR HORTENZIA

Profile 3: Hortenzia

Hortenzia is 17 and in Year 2 of upper secondary. She comes from a large size family of 11 siblings. Her parents work for the municipality and earn a very low wage. Hortenzia is responsible for the care of her siblings, and she is pregnant. She is often absent from school due to her care duties but has good craft skills and is motivated to learn. Although determined and having a strong social network of peers, she has started feeling stigmatised by teachers and classmates due to her pregnancy and wants to dropout from school.

INTERVENTIONS – SCHOOL LEVEL

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Psychological counselling: The school psychologist could work with Hortenzia on (i) re-connecting with her motivation for learning and education; (ii) socio-emotional support throughout pregnancy and preparation to motherhood and to address stigmatisation; (iii) decision-making support about leaving school early vs completing her vocational education; (iv) identifying the support that she needs to return to school after birth.

Attendance

(If appropriate) identification of the father and family discussion with the school management and the school psychologist to discuss support strategies so that Hortenzia can complete upper secondary education.

Learning

Discuss an individual education plan with: (i) an amended timetable to enable Hortenzia to combine school and motherhood after giving birth; (ii) a learning catch-up plan.

Discussion with career counsellor to confirm with Hortenzia that the education stream she is following is appropriate.

School connectedness

Collective work on addressing stigmatisation. The school support team could address all teachers to discuss stigmatisation about early pregnancy.

INTERVENTIONS – CLASSROOM LEVEL

Learning

Defining learning support strategies to help Hortenzia return to school after birth. Teachers would work together to identify learning priorities and ensure that learning support strategies in different subjects are coherent and appropriate. The school social pedagogue could provide additional support to teachers and Hortenzia.

School connectedness

Address by the school psychologist on issues pertaining to social exclusion and stigmatisation.

HOLISTIC DROPOUT PREVENTION SUPPORT FOR HORTENZIA

INTERVENTIONS – PEER LEVEL

School connectedness

Encourage peers to organise a fundraising activity to collect funds and baby related accessories that would be useful to Hortenzia.

INTERVENTIONS – PARENT LEVEL

Attendance

Discussion with parents to find alternative care measures for Hortenzia's siblings and free time for her to attend school. Overall discussion on family support for Hortenzia's education post delivery.

INTERVENTIONS – EXTERNAL SERVICES LEVEL

Mental Health and Wellbeing

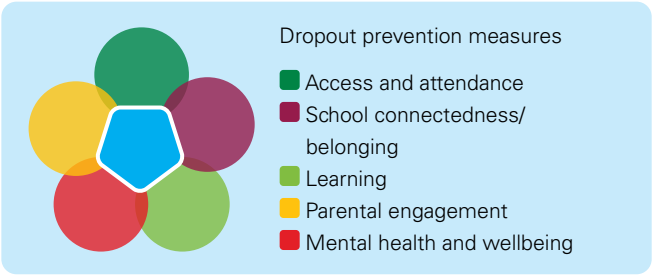
Referral to health services to ensure that Hortenzia and her baby receive adequate pre-natal and post-natal care.

Referral to social services should there be any red flags for the health and care of the baby or should financial support be required. Depending on Hortenzia's situation and wishes, alternative accommodation might be sought by the municipality (e.g. for single mothers).

INTERVENTIONS – COMMUNITY LEVEL

Attendance and Mental Health and Wellbeing

Linking with municipality or local community groups (e.g. mothers' groups, women's groups, Roma NGOs if she is part of the Roma community, community nurseries) to support with child care and early parenthood.



HOLISTIC DROPOUT PREVENTION SUPPORT FOR JAN

Profile 4: Jan

Jan is 16 years old attending the first year of vocational secondary education in a school that is far away from his home. Jan is from a socially disadvantaged background and has five young siblings. His father earns a very small wage, and his mother is on maternity leave. Jan's family cannot afford the school's boarding facility and struggles to pay for school transport, school supplies, or the internet which is necessary for schoolwork.

Jan is frequently absent from school, leading to exclusions. His academic underperformance resulted in a class repetition. Jan feels depressed by his situation and is anxious about his future. His attendance is constrained by his family requiring help for chores and caring for his siblings and by lack of funds to pay for school transport. His academic engagement is constrained by lack of supplies and no internet. He is an excellent dancer but does not have the time or financial means for a hobby.

INTERVENTIONS – SCHOOL LEVEL

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Psychological counselling: Jan receives psychological support to overcome his anxiety, enhance resilience and develop goals for his future.

School connectedness

Involvement in school and local community events: Building on Jan's talent for dancing, the school ensures to provide him with the opportunity to perform at major school and local community events.

Parental engagement

Parental awareness raising: the school organises meetings with parents at times that are convenient to them, possibly conducting home visits if appropriate and welcome by the family. Meetings would focus on (i) raising awareness about Jan's situation and the importance for him to complete education, and (ii) exploring ways in which the school could help the family address key barriers to regular attendance.

INTERVENTIONS – CLASSROOM LEVEL

Learning

Mentoring: A class teacher is identified with Jan to act as a mentor. The teacher receives concrete guidance on mentoring from the school support team and organises one weekly check in with Jan to (i) identify gaps and priorities in learning; (ii) develop study skills, particularly time management and homework strategies; (iii) discuss challenges and brainstorm strategies to overcome them; (iv) support Jan's motivation for learning.

Additional support from social pedagogue: Combined with the mentoring, Jan receives support from a social pedagogue to ensure that independent learning skills are improved and maintained.

Praise and encouragements: Class teachers will acknowledge efforts, praise and encourage Jan so that he experiences a feeling of success and becomes hopeful. Constructive feedback techniques will be used, whereby teachers provide feedback on specific strengths and study strategies used by Jan in class and help him identify his next step for learning.

HOLISTIC DROPOUT PREVENTION SUPPORT FOR JAN

INTERVENTIONS – PEER LEVEL

Learning

Peer support: Encouraging Jan's peers to share class notes and information on homework when Jan is absent from school.

Attendance

Contract with parents: The school, together with parents, identifies short term goals for attendance improvement. The school plans on providing positive feedback to the family when attendance targets are met, so that contact with parents does not only take place to address problems and challenges.

INTERVENTIONS – EXTERNAL SERVICES LEVEL

Attendance

School transport: The school will explore options to secure a transport allowance from the Municipality or from the bus company for Jan. Other avenues to address the transport issue might include car sharing with other families.

Liaising with the labour office: Should this be relevant to the situation of Jan's father, linkages with the labour office could take place so that Jan's father could explore upskilling opportunities which could contribute to advancing his career.

Exploring childcare options: In close collaboration with the family, liaising with the municipality to identify child care options for younger siblings so that Jan can attend school more regularly.

INTERVENTIONS – COMMUNITY LEVEL

Attendance

School transport: The school will explore options to secure a transport allowance from the Municipality or from the bus company for Jan. Other avenues to address the transport issue might include car sharing with other families.

Liaising with the labour office: Should this be relevant to the situation of Jan's father, linkages with the labour office could take place so that Jan's father could explore upskilling opportunities which could contribute to advancing his career.

Exploring childcare options: In close collaboration with the family, liaising with the municipality to identify child care options for younger siblings so that Jan can attend school more regularly.

HOLISTIC DROPOUT PREVENTION SUPPORT FOR ANTON

Profile 4: Anton

Anton, a 16 years old Ukrainian, enrolled in the first year of a technical secondary school with a boarding facility. He came to Slovakia without his parents, through an intermediary agency paid by his parents. An unaccompanied minor, Anton was appointed a guardian. His guardian is not always available, which creates obstacles for Anton's when school matters require the consent of a legal representative.

Anton is finishing Ukrainian secondary school online. He is skipping part of Slovak school to work and gain money. Additionally, burdened by his Ukrainian studies, he is disengaging from Slovak education and his academic results suffer. Anton, who is well integrated in the school and boarding facility, told his Slovak peers that he planned to dropout from the Slovak education system once he successfully completes Ukrainian education to enrol in a local university. Anton's teachers are concerned that his lack of maturity will prevent him from starting Slovak university on the right foot.

INTERVENTIONS – SCHOOL LEVEL

Learning

Career counselling: The School Support Team together with the career counsellor meet with Anton to highlight the main risks of joining university without completing Slovak education. Additionally, the career counsellor works with Anton on career goals and identifies whether other education streams would enable Anton to complete Slovak school in fewer years.

University transition support: Should Anton decide to dropout and enrol in a Slovak university upon successful completion of his Ukraine education, the career counsellor will support him with university enrolment (choice of subjects and administrative issues).

INTERVENTIONS – CLASSROOM LEVEL

Learning

Enhancing motivation: Teachers are tasked by trying to enhance Anton's motivation for learning Slovak subjects. To do so, teachers ensure that homework and assessments for Anton builds on his areas of interest and are linked to his career goals.

INTERVENTIONS – PEER LEVEL

Learning

Peer tutoring in the boarding school: The school sets up a peer tutoring activity at the boarding school whereby older pupils tutor pupils from lower grades. This fosters cohesion, motivation, and would enable Anton and other of his peers to benefit from additional learning support.

INTERVENTIONS – PARENT LEVEL

Parental engagement

Contacting parents: The School Support Team contacts Anton's parents in Ukraine and his legal guardian to advocate for the pursuit and completion of Slovak education.

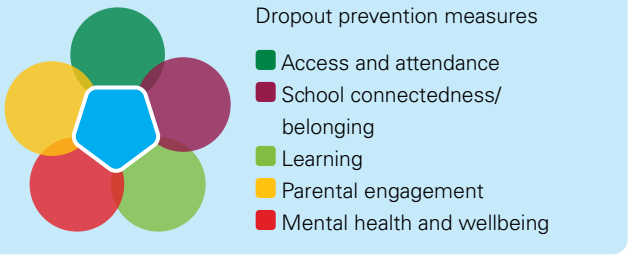
HOLISTIC DROPOUT PREVENTION SUPPORT FOR ANTON

INTERVENTIONS – EXTERNAL SERVICES LEVEL

Attendance support **Contact the Regional Education Coordinator for refugee children (NIVAM):** The School Support Team invites the Regional Education Coordinator to advocate for the	completion of Slovak education. The Regional Coordinator talks to Anton, his parents and his legal guardian and shares the high level of dropout from University for Ukrainian pupils who have not completed Slovak secondary education.

INTERVENTIONS – COMMUNITY LEVEL

Attendance support **Financial support. The school will explore two avenues to support Anton financially:** (i) Securing a scholarship from one of the local company the school partners with for school placements	and internships. If option (i) fails, the school will (ii) Look for a paid internship to replace his part time jobs. This would provide more stability and consistent working hours which could better be aligned with the school's timetable.



HOLISTIC DROPOUT PREVENTION SUPPORT FOR KEVIN

Profile 6: Kevin

Kevin is in primary school, he is 14 years old and in Grade 6. Kevin comes from a marginalised Roma community. His father has taken a long-term job in England with his older brother. With remittances, his mother, who stays at home with his little sister, is financially secure. There is domestic violence in the family. Kevin's dad has been physically violent towards his mother on multiple occasions and Kevin has demonstrated some brutal gesture towards her too.

Kevin has a business mindset and is dealing drugs - among other petty crime ventures, and he is known of the local police. Authoritarian in nature, his peers follow him based on fear rather than genuine leadership qualities.

Kevin is often absent from school, but never to the point of being expelled, and he has some learning difficulty. He has displayed some aggressive behaviour towards school staff.

INTERVENTIONS – SCHOOL LEVEL

Learning

Special pedagogue: The special pedagogue works with Kevin on his learning difficulty, building his study skills and gradually catching up on learning from main subjects.

Leadership skills development: The school involves Kevin in a school project where he can take on responsibilities, further developing his leadership and entrepreneurial skills (e.g. social impact project, fundraising and business case development for acquiring some sports equipment for the school, financial literacy development project, etc).

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Behaviour management support: The school psychologist provides behaviour management support for Kevin based on mutual understanding. The psychologist involves Kevin in the process of addressing his own behaviour issues. Clarifying the concept of shared responsibility, the school psychologist and Kevin work on an individual behaviour plan, which includes how to manage emotions, build relationships, and make responsible decisions.

Supporting teachers with behaviour management techniques: The school psychologist guides teachers and Kevin's mentor on how to set clear expectations for Kevin and work with positive reinforcement.

School connectedness

Mentoring: The school identifies a mentor (a positive masculine role model), jointly with Kevin. The mentor builds rapport with Kevin, maximising opportunities for both formal and informal activities. Together, they work on short term goals and positive reinforcement to improve behaviour at school and schoolwork.

HOLISTIC DROPOUT PREVENTION SUPPORT FOR KEVIN

INTERVENTIONS – CLASSROOM LEVEL

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Bullying socio-emotional learning: The school psychologist addresses several classes, including Kevin's on bullying and socio-emotional learning, with a focus on boundary settings and emotion management.

INTERVENTIONS – PEER LEVEL

School connectedness

Social cohesion work: Peers are involved in project work with the Students' Parliament to enhance social cohesion in the school and Kevin's class in particular.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Intervention of the police focal point and school nurse in every Grade 6 classes of the school to discuss substance abuse and its negative impact.

INTERVENTIONS – PARENT LEVEL

Parental engagement

Working with the father: The school tries to obtain the contact details of Kevin's father to set up a call or organise a face-to-face meeting when he is next in the country. Engaging the father when things go well with Kevin is critical so he does not always associate discussions with the school to be negative and problem focused.

INTERVENTIONS – EXTERNAL SERVICES LEVEL

Parental engagement

Referral to social services or working with women shelters or gender based violence local organisations. This work has to be done sensitively and the school will not try to substitute itself to professionals working on domestic violence issues in Kevin's community.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

If alongside selling drugs, Kevin is also practicing substance abuse, a **referral to the school nurse or health authorities** might be required to support him.

INTERVENTIONS – COMMUNITY LEVEL

Parental engagement

Working with the mother, the school identifies potential extended family and community masculine role models for Kevin. This can be done together with the Church or with community leaders in Kevin's neighbourhood.

Dropout prevention measures

- Access and attendance
- School connectedness/ belonging
- Learning
- Parental engagement
- Mental health and wellbeing

STEP 5 Assess, Evaluate and Improve Practices

Schools benefit from assessing and reflecting on their practices to welcome all children and address dropout risks. This enables them to make changes where needed and improve their work.

Schools usually find it useful to use simple tools such as SWOT analysis, reflective practice questions or self-evaluation grids to support their exploration.

When implementing various activities and reflecting on their practices and experience, schools can also generate valuable learning. This learning can inspire others and be shared with other schools, and education stakeholders such as NIVAM, VUDPAP, school founders, municipalities and the Ministry of Education.

Examples of assessment and review tools

EXAMPLE 1: 10 QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

These questions are best for school leaders and Support Team members to support their personal or team reflection on school practices and areas for improvement.

Tool 5: 10 questions for reflective practice

1. Were pupils at risk of dropping out identified sufficiently early?
2. What could we improve in the way we identify pupils are risk of dropping out?
3. What interventions are the most successful in our school with pupils at risk of dropping out? How do we know?
4. What interventions are the most successful to welcome, include and support pupils with a refugee, migrant, Roma, or special educational needs background?
5. How well does our school support pupils at risk of dropping out and pupils with diverse education access, attendance and learning needs?
6. What could we do better or differently to improve our support to pupils at risk of dropping out, including refugee, migrant, Roma, or special educational needs background?
7. How well are all teaching and other school professionals working together in our school to tackle dropout risks and ensure that all pupils feel welcome, included, valued and supported?
8. What are the views of teachers, support staff and managers on the work done by our school for pupils at risk?
9. What are the views of parents and pupils on the work done by our school for pupils at risk?
10. What are the views and recommendations of external services and education authorities on the work done by our school for pupils at risk?

EXAMPLE 2: SWOT METHODOLOGY FOR SITUATION ANALYSIS

A SWOT analysis is a useful tool to analyse a situation from different angles: the strengths, the weaknesses, the opportunities and the threats.

Schools can use the SWOT methodology to take stock of their dropout prevention practices, what works well and less well, what's missing, what could be improved, and how.

A SWOT analysis is best conducted as a group including the school director and deputy directors, teachers, other staff such as pedagogues, psychologists, special teachers, career counsellors, and teaching assistants.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Tool 6: SWOT analysis

You can organise your SWOT analysis around the following school practices:

- Identification of pupils at risk of dropping out.
- Reducing absenteeism and promoting attendance.
- Supporting learning for non-Slovak speakers, for refugee and migrant who need to catch up on learning, for low performers, for other disadvantage groups
- Promoting wellbeing and supporting mental health
- Engaging with parents and carers of children at risk, refugee, migrant and marginalized groups
- Teacher and other staff attitudes towards helping pupils at risk of dropping out
- Effectiveness of the School Support Team for working with pupils at risk
- Leadership for dropout prevention and the promotion of welcoming, inclusive, caring and supportive learning environments for all pupils.

INTERNAL (school level)	**Strengths** School factors and existing practices that have a positive effect on reducing dropout and supporting the creation of welcoming, inclusive and supportive learning environments for all pupils.	**Weaknesses** School factors and existing practices that are a barrier to reducing dropout or creating welcoming, inclusive and supportive learning environments for all pupils.
EXTERNAL (environment)	**Opportunities** External factors that have a positive effect on reducing dropout and creating welcoming, inclusive and supportive learning environments for all pupils in your school.	**Threats** External factors and conditions that have a negative effect on reducing dropout or on and the creation of welcoming, inclusive and supportive learning environments for all pupils in your school.

EXAMPLE 3: SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

Schools can use a self-evaluation tool to assess dropout prevention practices and the level of care, inclusion and support for refugee, migrant, Roma and other disadvantaged children.

School self-evaluation tools are useful to gather the opinions and feedback of all school stakeholders, including pupils, parents, external services and community stakeholders.

An **example of school self-evaluation tool** for dropout prevention is presented in Annex 8.

SCHOOL PLANNING FOR DROPOUT PREVENTION

In many countries schools have a specific plan of action for dropout prevention. In others, schools include dropout prevention planning in their regular school development plans.

The tool below provides a simple action plan template for schools and School Support Teams who want to be more strategic and effective in this area.

Additionally, Annex 6 presents a simple **planning cycle for schools to use in planning dropout prevention** work and how to improve their welcome, inclusion, care and support for all children, including refugee and migrant children, Roma pupils and learners with disabilities.

Tool 7: Action plan template

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION	BY WHEN?	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?	WHO WILL BE INVOLVED?	RESULTS YOU ARE EXPECTING?	HOW WILL YOU KNOW THAT RESULTS ARE ACHIEVED?

EXAMPLES OF ACTION PLANS

Below are some examples of action plans from School Support Teams to improve their work on dropout prevention and ensure that all pupils, regardless of their background, complete secondary education.

EXAMPLE 1

Activity description	By when?	Who is responsible?	Who will be involved?	Results you are expecting?	How will you know that results are achieved?
Induction programme for Year 1 pupils (team building week-end at the beginning of the school year)	End of September	School Deputy Director Year 1 class teachers	Year 1 class teachers School psychologist School teachers	School connectedness Friendships developed Reduced chance of dropping out	Level of satisfaction of pupils Year 1 pupils complete their year in the school
Development of a buddy programme for Ukrainian pupils	September - June	School psychologist	School psychologist Pupils Students' Parliament	School connectedness Friendship, bonding, socialisation Wellbeing improvement and participation of pupils in the school Improved learning and study skills	Level of satisfaction of pupils Improved learning results Socialisation
Morning circles for Year 3 pupils	October - June	School psychologist Social pedagogue	Pupils Students' Parliament Class teachers School psychologist Social pedagogue	Wellbeing improvement Socio-emotional learning Behaviour improvement Stress reduction	Level of satisfaction of pupils Improved school climate Increased tolerance and respect Reduced referrals to school psychologist
Discussions and workshops on dropout prevention and support to pupils at risk	6 times / year	School Support Team	Teachers Leadership team School Support Team	Greater understanding of how all teachers can help pupils at risk Greater motivation to support young people	Event attendance Identification of pupils at risk and tailored measures to prevent dropping out Teachers sharing good practices
Morning circles for teachers	6 times / year	School psychologist	Teachers School Support Team	Improved teacher and staff wellbeing Improved collaboration	Level of satisfaction of participants Attendance levels

EXAMPLE 2

Activity description	By when?	Who is responsible?	Who will be involved?	Results you are expecting?	How will you know that results are achieved?
Analysis of risk factors, identification of pupils at risk and development of targeted interventions	Mid-October	School Deputy Director School psychologist	School Support Team Class teachers, teachers Pupils Parents Other stakeholders as relevant	Reduce dropout risk Improve the school experience	Increased attendance Increased motivation and learning results Increased behaviour (where relevant) Increased wellbeing
Improve the communication and collaboration between class teachers and teacher	By January	Support team	Class teacher Teachers Support team	Mapping challenges and issues Brainstorming solutions Sharing suggestions	Feedback from class teachers and teachers Feedback from Support Team
Improve communication with parents: 1. Teacher awareness raising on communication and parental engagement 2. Morning coffees with parents	1. October 2. 4 times/year	School psychologist School Deputy Director Interpreter	Class teachers Support Team	Actions from class teachers to engage with parents Increased parental interest in their own children and in school	Teacher feedback Parent feedback Increased attendance and improved learning
Class teachers develop pupils' soft skills and socio-emotional learning	Monthly	Class teacher	Class teachers School psychologist Special pedagogue	Improved teacher – pupil relationships Improved wellbeing	Fewer request for support to the Support Team Improved school climate Pupils emotional self-regulation improved Improved learning results
Collaboration with employers (dual education) for career education and work placements	During the school year/study	Head of VET sections	Employers Pupils on social benefits School Support Team	Active participation in employment	Increased attendance, Improved results in school and in dual practice
Multicultural days	November	School Director / Deputy Director	All school stakeholders: staff, pupils, parents, community	Improved school climate Increased tolerance and understanding	Level of satisfaction from parents, pupils and teachers Reduced bullying

EFFECTIVE SCHOOL SUPPORT TEAMS

To be effective, School Support Teams need to work strategically and collaboratively.

The School Support Team members who participated in consultation and training workshops on dropout prevention and support for refugee and migrant pupils in Slovakia identified key dimensions to make their work effective:

- Inviting teachers and other school staff to express their **needs for support** from the School Support Team.
- Developing a joint school **vision**, with clear priorities, activities, and timelines.
- Prioritising activities with the most potential **impact** first.
- Conveying the vision to the **school leadership** team and present it to teachers, pupils and parents.
- **Monthly meetings with the school leadership**, to share information on activities, progress and results.
- Organising **weekly School Support Team meetings** to reflect on practices, plan activities and discuss children's cases.
- Involving a **diversity of school staff** in the School Support Team. Ensure ethnic and language diversity, including Roma and Ukrainian-speaking pedagogues and pedagogical assistants in dropout prevention work and leveraging their role for family and community relation building and support. Ensure gender diversity where possible so that boys and girls, and fathers and mothers can speak with diverse professionals with different life experiences.
- **Documenting best practices** on how to use the support measures, how to create welcoming, inclusive, and supportive environments, and how to support pupils at risk of dropping out.
- **Reflecting** on how the Team works together and how processes could be improved.
- **Supporting teachers** to be more inclusive and supportive of pupils from diverse backgrounds and those at risk of dropping out.

TIPS FROM SCHOOL SUPPORT TEAMS

Encouraging the participation of class teachers in dropout prevention activities

Build relationships with teachers based on mutual respect and shared understanding.

Ask teachers what they need support with and provide tips and guidance, including good practices from other teachers in the school.

Involve heads of subject committees to gain trust and support.

Maximise existing regular teacher meetings, such as meetings between teachers and the school leadership team, to discuss key issues and present new approaches or activities, such as dropout prevention or targeted support for Ukrainian pupils.

Work first with teachers who are willing to make a difference for children.

Overcome potential resistance by starting slowly. Explain that supporting pupils is more about adopting the right attitude than knowledge about what to do. Name the practices that teachers are describing and sharing. This conveys appreciation and encouragement. Make progress and change visible, share positive stories and feedback from pupils and families.

Challenge entrenched beliefs on stigma and prejudice. Organise morning circles for teachers – offering a space for sharing issues and practices and learning from each other (bring coffee and biscuits!).

Organise team building activities and days out for teachers.

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Annex 1 – Dropout Risk Factors

Subcategory		Examples of risk factors
Child	Age	Overage compared to class peers owing to grade repetition Older pupils (more at risk of dropping out than younger pupils, particularly beyond compulsory education age)
	Sex	Differentiated risk factors for boys and girls Pregnancy, (early) marriage, caring responsibilities, income generation
	Physical and mental health	Chronic or life-threatening illness Development delay, disability Depression and mental health issues and disorders Low self-esteem Substance abuse Self-harm HIV status or living with AIDS (particularly for those adolescent men who have sex with men, transgender people, adolescents who inject drugs and sex workers)
	Location	Distance to and from school Frequent change of place of residence or school, including internal and seasonal migration
	Ethnicity & language	Discrimination and marginalisation Mother tongue different from the language of instruction Expulsion from school Bullied at school Discrimination in school due to gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation No pre-primary education Exam stress Repetition Chronic absenteeism Poor academic achievement
	Social engagement	Poor school behaviour Limited capacities to form relationships Conflict with the law
	Other life experiences	Refugee / unaccompanied minor Young carer (early parenthood or caring for relatives) Working children Violence and abuse survivors
Family	Family structure	Single-parent households, grandparent-led households
	Family demographics	Large-size families Marginalized ethnic and linguistic minorities Families with mental health issues in the household
	Family norms and practices	History of dropout among parents and siblings Dysfunctional families Child neglect, abuse or exploitation in the family Low education aspirations for children Very poor, low socio-economic status households Socially vulnerable/excluded families

ANNEX 1 – DROPOUT RISK FACTORS

Subcategory		Examples of risk factors
Fam.	Mobility	Refugee, migrant families Families with high mobility/seasonal work
School	Structure and organization	Poor school leadership and management Lack of inclusive ethos Poor school climate, academic and social exclusion Lack of availability of subject or TVET streams
	Resources (financial, human and material)	Deprived school Limited budget and autonomy for budget expenditure Lack of teachers and support staff (psychologists, pedagogues, teaching assistants, etc.)
	School policies	Weak attendance rules & policies and a weak absentee management system School selection and repetition policies
	School practices (activities, available support and interactions in the classroom and in the school)	Low education quality Teacher and staff bias, prejudices and discrimination (particularly regarding ethnicity, gender and disability) Lack of inclusive pedagogy Weak academic and learning support for low achievers, lack of language of instruction learning support, lack of development and learning support for pupils with disabilities or special needs Weak social and emotional support for pupils, weak wellbeing support Weak relationships between school staff (teachers and support staff) and pupils Poor school-parent relationships Limited parent involvement/participation from at-risk groups in school activities and school planning Low consideration for pupil voice and little pupil participation High incidence of violence or bullying, including gender-based violence, in school
System factors	Legislation, regulations	Administrative hurdles for enrolment (ID cards, birth certificates, resident permits, etc.) Administrative hurdles for stateless children and undocumented migrants Costs and hidden costs of education for families Discriminatory legislation (gender, disability, ethnicity, language, undocumented migrant children) Low political will
	Education, social and other relevant policies	Limited equity-focus in education/social policies and education/social funding and financing Limited inclusive education and inclusive social policies Limited relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of cross-sector coordination and support mechanisms for children at risk of not enrolling in, or dropping out of, education
	Social norms	Weak social values around gender equality, social inclusion and non-discrimination Discriminatory gender norms
	Country situation	Economy Conflict, disasters and crisis.

Source: Adapted from Lyche (2010) and UNICEF (2017)

Annex 2 – Example of Indicators for Identifying Pupils at Risk of Dropping Out

Here is a list of common predictors of dropout and examples of indicators that can be used by schools to identify pupils at risk of dropping out.

Domain	Generic	Example of indicator	Method
Early Warning Signs			
Absenteeism	Number of unjustified absences	Pupil has [X] number of unjustified absences per month	School data
Academic achievement	Poor grades Repetition	Pupil has [X] marks and/or Pupil has repeated twice or more	School data
Behaviour	Disruptive behaviour at school Previous expulsion	Pupil has [X] recorded incident of disruptive behaviour At least one school expulsion in last 2 school years	School data
Education pathway	Inadequate education stream	Pupil is not in education stream of own choice or Pupil realises lack of interest for current education stream	Questionnaire to pupil
Aggravating risk factors			
Age	Overage by 2 years or more	Pupil is overage by 2 years or more	School data
Illness or disability	Chronic illness or disability impinging on education	Pupil has illness or disability impinging on education access, learning or participation	School data
Personal circumstances	Caring responsibilities Work responsibilities Young offender Child protection concerns Pregnancy/parenthood Married/at-risk of being married Previous dropout history	Pupil has significant caring responsibilities for siblings, parents or relatives Pupil works to earn a living Pupil is/has previously been in conflict with the law Pupil is pregnant/a parent Pupil is married/at risk of being married Pupil has previous history of dropout	School data and/or questionnaire to pupil Data from pupil's previous school (for risk and dropout history)
Family circumstances	Low socio-economic status of household /poverty level Remote location and transport issues Lack of family support	Pupil's household is in lowest wealth quintile Pupil faces significant transport challenges to attend school Pupil is not supported by family to finish education	School data and/or questionnaire to pupil
Self-confidence	Confidence Vision for the future	Low confidence in academic abilities Lack of vision for future self	Questionnaire to pupil or Teachers assessment
Belonging	Sense of belonging to school	Pupil feels connected to the school community and activities Pupil feels welcome into the school by peers and teachers	Questionnaire to pupil or Teacher assessment
Bullying	Experience of school bullying	Pupil has experienced school bullying in last 12 months	School data and/or questionnaire to pupil
Additional risk factor based on school context	[xxx]	[xxx]	[xxx]
Additional risk factor based on school context	[xxx]	[xxx]	[xxx]

Annex 3 – Pupil Questionnaire for Dropout Prevention Risk Identification

This is an example of a simple questionnaire that could be used and/or adapted by schools to identify and discuss pupils' educational experience, relationship and connectedness with school, engagement in learning, and perceived level of acceptance and support by families, teachers and peers.

	Statements	Disagree strongly	Disagree somewhat	Agree somewhat	Agree strongly
1	My parents/carers think that my education is important	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	My parents/carers support me with my schoolwork	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	I have enough time to do my homework at home	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	I feel tired when I am at school	☐	☐	☐	☐
5	I feel hungry when I am at school	☐	☐	☐	☐
6	Getting to school is difficult because it is far away	☐	☐	☐	☐
7	My family can pay for school supplies	☐	☐	☐	☐
8	I am confident in my ability to learn new things	☐	☐	☐	☐
9	I am interested in learning new things at school and outside	☐	☐	☐	☐
10	I find it difficult to concentrate in class	☐	☐	☐	☐
11	I attend extracurricular activities at school	☐	☐	☐	☐
12	The classes I take are linked to my life and career interests	☐	☐	☐	☐
13	School adds value to my life	☐	☐	☐	☐
14	I find schoolwork and homework too difficult	☐	☐	☐	☐
15	The hardest part at school is the school hours	☐	☐	☐	☐
16	The hardest part at school is teacher	☐	☐	☐	☐
17	The hardest part at school is other pupils	☐	☐	☐	☐
18	Teachers and school staff are interested in me as a person, not just a pupil	☐	☐	☐	☐

ANNEX 3 – PUPIL QUESTIONNAIRE FOR DROPOUT PREVENTION RISK IDENTIFICATION

	Statements	Disagree strongly	Disagree somewhat	Agree somewhat	Agree strongly
19	My teachers support and help me in class	☐	☐	☐	☐
20	My teachers care about me	☐	☐	☐	☐
21	My teachers treat me like any other pupil in the class	☐	☐	☐	☐
22	My teachers discriminate or are unfair with me in class	☐	☐	☐	☐
23	The school takes my needs into consideration	☐	☐	☐	☐
24	Doing well in school is important for my future career goals	☐	☐	☐	☐
25	I want to do well in school	☐	☐	☐	☐
26	I want to complete upper secondary education	☐	☐	☐	☐
27	I am self-motivated to do my schoolwork	☐	☐	☐	☐
28	tMy friends have dropped out from school	☐	☐	☐	☐
29	I feel pressured by my friend to leave school	☐	☐	☐	☐
30	Drug or alcohol use interfere with my attendance and learning	☐	☐	☐	☐
31	I have to work to support myself or my family	☐	☐	☐	☐
32	I find the school welcoming and safe	☐	☐	☐	☐
33	I have been bullied on the school premises	☐	☐	☐	☐
34	I have been bullied on the way to school	☐	☐	☐	☐
35	I was sexually assaulted or harassed on school premises	☐	☐	☐	☐
36	I feel accepted for who I am at school	☐	☐	☐	☐
37	I have one good friend or more in school	☐	☐	☐	☐
38	I am nervous in new situations and I easily lose confidence	☐	☐	☐	☐
39	Other pupils respect what I have to say	☐	☐	☐	☐
40	I have one good friend or more outside of school	☐	☐	☐	☐
41	There is one adult I can talk to about my problems at school	☐	☐	☐	☐

ANNEX 3 – PUPIL QUESTIONNAIRE FOR DROPOUT PREVENTION RISK IDENTIFICATION

	Statements	Disagree strongly	Disagree somewhat	Agree somewhat	Agree strongly
42	I am hopeful about the future	☐	☐	☐	☐
43	The school rules are fair	☐	☐	☐	☐
44	I feel listened too by adults at school	☐	☐	☐	☐
45	I feel anxious when I go to school	☐	☐	☐	☐

Source: Adapted from (i) McCoach, B. and Siegle, D. (2003) The School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised. Educational and Psychological Measurement, Vol. 63 No. 3, June 2003 414-429; (ii) Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (www.sdqinfo.com); and (iii) Pupil Engagement Instrument.

Annex 4 – Protocol for Welcoming Migrant and Refugee Pupils

A clear protocol that is applied consistently when a new refugee pupil enrol in the school has clear benefits for the child, their parents, and the school.

Here is an example of protocol for welcoming migrant and refugee pupils in your school:

A. Meet the parents/carers and the child

1. Meeting between the school director, the parents/carers and the child.
2. The meeting is facilitated by a translator if needed.
3. A visit of the school facilities is organised for the child and the parents/carers.
4. The classroom is shown to the child and the parents/carers.

B. Provide information

5. Key elements of the school organisation are explained, including: Who is who, the timetable of the child, the school rules.
6. Key elements of the support in place in the school for migrant and refugee children are discussed
7. Key information on the differences and bridges between the home country and host country education systems is provided
8. A leaflet with key information on the school organisation is handed over to the parents/carers
9. Provide links to the Ministry of Education and other relevant resources with information for the education of migrant and refugee children, particularly NIVAM and VUDPAP.

C. Appoint a focal point for the family

10. One school staff is assigned as contact/support person for the family
11. The contact detail and phone number of the contact person is shared with the family.

D. Organise routine support for the child

12. A buddy is assigned to the child.
13. A daily or weekly check & connect is agreed with the child and the parents/carers

E. Provide information on external resources

14. Provide contact details for the NIVAM Regional Coordinator
15. Provide information on any migrant and refugee NGOs and support groups
16. Provide information on municipality services for migrant and refugee families

Annex 5 – Example of Pupil Dropout Prevention Plan

STUDENT DROPOUT PREVENTION PLAN – GENERAL INFORMATION

PUPIL'S NAME:	DATE OF BIRTH:	STUDENT'S CLASS:
CASE MANAGER'S NAME:		

DROPOUT SIGNS AND CHALLENGES FACED BY THE PUPIL

EWS SIGNS / DESCRIPTION

- ☐ Absenteeism
- ☐ Poor learning achievement
- ☐ Poor behaviour…
- ☐ Education pathway (adequacy)
- ☐ Personal circumstances (specify)
- ☐ Additional challenges/information

STRENGTHS OF THE STUDENT
(protective factors, interests, talents, abilities …)

MEASURES

What? Description of the intervention measures	**Who?**	**By when?**	**Comments** (on implementation, resources needed)	**Progress review** (signs of progress, adjustments to measures)

REFERRAL – HAS THE STUDENT BEEN REFERRED TO EXTERNAL SERVICES/PROFESSIONALS?

☐ YES ☐ NO	**Details**	**Date**

CASE CLOSURE

Comment	**Date**

Annex 6 – Supporting the Planning Process for Schools and Support Teams

Analyse the situation: (i) profile of pupils at risk of dropping out/school failure, risk factors and needs; (ii) strengths and weaknesses of school practices for dropout prevention and refugee integration; (iii) strengths and gaps in school staff capacity and skills for dropout prevention and sustaining welcoming, inclusive supportive learning environments.

Establish a school vision and plan activities for dropout prevention and supportive learning environments, responding to the risk factors and needs of pupils, and building on the strengths of current school practices while addressing areas for improvement.

Review / evaluate your approach and plan. What worked? What didn't work? Why? What can you improve and how? Who can help you? Share lessons with other schools. Use your learning as part of your assessment for your new situation analysis

Implement your plan. Ensure clear responsibilities across school staff for activities. Work with others (CPP, NIVAM, NGOs, municipalities, school founders, communities…). Monitor implementation, document and share good practices.

Annex 7 – Self-evaluation Tool:

School practices for dropout prevention and creating welcoming and supportive learning environments

A whole school approach tackles dropout effectively and creates and maintains welcoming and supportive learning environments.

This requires schools to identify and address the needs of their pupils and communities and to engage in continuous processes of improvement.

This can be done through a transparent and participatory **school self-evaluation** and **school planning** process that addresses the issue of dropout and the underlying factors that are pushing some pupils out of school before completing primary, upper secondary general or VET education or that are impeding their transition to higher education or the world of work.

Below is one self-evaluation template for your school to assess where it is now regarding dropout prevention and support to young people who need it most. After conducting the self-evaluation, schools can identify areas for improvement and strategies to enhance dropout prevention areas where it is the weakest.

Capacity functions	Strongly in place	Accept-able	Needs improve-ment	Major gaps	Comments
Embedded dropout prevention and holistic welcoming, wellbeing and learning support for all children, particularly children from a disadvantaged socio-economic, migrant or minority background					
The school makes a priority of welcoming and supporting new pupils, particularly migrant, minority or socially disadvantaged pupils, and of preventing dropout	☐	☐	☐	☐	
The school ethos supports the welcoming and supporting of pupils from a diverse background	☐	☐	☐	☐	
The school has a dropout prevention plan or a plan to welcome and support refugee or minority children	☐	☐	☐	☐	
The school support team engages in dropout prevention activities and supports all pupils to feel welcome and supported	☐	☐	☐	☐	
The school regularly identifies pupils at risk of dropping out (a system is in place)	☐	☐	☐	☐	
The school analyses absenteeism and dropout data to inform its dropout prevention, wellbeing and learning support interventions	☐	☐	☐	☐	
The school adopts a whole school approach to dropout prevention, including targeted interventions for groups of children most at risk, including refugee and minority children	☐	☐	☐	☐	

ANNEX 7 – SELF-EVALUATION TOOL: SCHOOL PRACTICES FOR DROPOUT PREVENTION

Capacity functions	Strongly in place	Accept-able	Needs improve-ment	Major gaps	Comments
The school plans and monitors individual interventions to help welcome, include, care and support pupils at risk and prevent them from dropping out	☐	☐	☐	☐	
The school routinely collects feedback from pupils on how welcoming and supportive the school and learning environment are for them	☐	☐	☐	☐	
The school routinely collects feedback from parents on how welcoming and supportive the school and learning environment are for their children	☐	☐	☐	☐	
The school monitors, evaluates and learns from dropout prevention activities and activities to support refugee or minority children	☐	☐	☐	☐	
The school shares experience and best practices on dropout prevention with other schools and with education authorities	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Welcoming and supporting the wellbeing of all pupils					
The school uses consistent welcome strategies systematically with all new pupils, particularly pupils from a migrant or minority background	☐	☐	☐	☐	
The school supports pupils at risk in their transition to the next education cycle or to the world of work	☐	☐	☐	☐	
The school promotes targeted wellbeing and mental health support activities for pupils at risk	☐	☐	☐	☐	
The school promotes positive peer-to-peer interactions and peer bonding	☐	☐	☐	☐	
The school promotes positive relationships between teachers, other adults and pupils	☐	☐	☐	☐	
The school provides opportunities for pupils at risk to connect and contribute	☐	☐	☐	☐	
The school actively addresses prejudices and discrimination, particularly against gender, ethnicity, disability and migrant background	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Supporting the learning of all pupils					
The school organises systematic Slovak language learning activities for migrant pupils	☐	☐	☐	☐	

ANNEX 7 – SELF-EVALUATION TOOL: SCHOOL PRACTICES FOR DROPOUT PREVENTION

Capacity functions	Strongly in place	Accept-able	Needs improve-ment	Major gaps	Comments
The school implements targeted learning support activities for pupils at risk, based on their learning needs (e.g. homework club, additional classes, tutoring…)	☐	☐	☐	☐	
The school supports pupils at risk to develop study skills (how to learn and study)	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Teachers regularly differentiate their instruction in the classroom to support the various learning needs of pupils at risk	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Parental engagement					
The school understands the barriers faced by parents to engage with the school or in their children education	☐	☐	☐	☐	
The school applies effective and positive communication practices with parents	☐	☐	☐	☐	
The school engages positively with parents of migrant children	☐	☐	☐	☐	
The school implements multiple strategies to involve hard-to-reach parents in school/children education	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Community stakeholder engagement					
The school engages and works effectively with external agencies/services to ensure pupils attend, complete and succeed in school	☐	☐	☐	☐	
The school is aware of referral procedures in case of violence, abuse and neglect against children, or in case of pregnancy and early marriage	☐	☐	☐	☐	
The school engages and works effectively with Child Protection and Social Assistance Services	☐	☐	☐	☐	
The school engages and works effectively with NIVAM Regional Coordinators for Ukrainian Pupils Inclusion	☐	☐	☐	☐	
The school engages and works effectively with the municipality and school founding bodies to ensure that all children enrol and attend school, including in upper secondary education	☐	☐	☐	☐	
The school engages and works effectively with the Counselling and Prevention Centres (CPP)	☐	☐	☐	☐	

ANNEX 7 – SELF-EVALUATION TOOL: SCHOOL PRACTICES FOR DROPOUT PREVENTION

Capacity functions	Strongly in place	Accept-able	Needs improve-ment	Major gaps	Comments
The school engages with Ukrainian and other migrant community-based organisations	☐	☐	☐	☐	
The school engages with NGOs and civil society organisations supporting socially disadvantaged families, Roma communities, and children with disabilities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	
The school engages with youth skills development and youth engagement community-based organisations	☐	☐	☐	☐	
The school engages with career advice, vocational training and employment community-based organisations and services	☐	☐	☐	☐	
The school engages with businesses and employers for sponsorships, fundraising and career advice.	☐	☐	☐	☐	

Annex 8 – Resources

RESOURCES IN SLOVAK:

Dropout prevention and early leaving

- Ministry of Education, Development, Research and Youth of the Slovak Republic. Činnosť na podporu predchádzania ukončenia školskej dochádzky v nižšom ako poslednom ročníku základnej školy alebo strednej školy, link
- Ministry of Education. Aplikačná pomôcka Ako byť v škole úspešnejší (Podpora žiakov a žiačok v povinnej školskej dochádzke s cieľom predchádzania opakovania ročníka), link
- UNICEF, 2025. Video on Buddy Programme - Program Buddy pomáha zabranovať predčasnému ukončovaniu vzdelávania - Stredná priemyselná škola dopravná Košice, link
- Európska Komisia, 2011. Odporúčanie Rady o politikách na zníženie počtu prípadov predčasného ukončenia školskej dochádzky, link
- Európska Komisia, 2022. Odporúčanie Rady týkajúce sa iniciatívy Cesta k úspechu v škole, ktorým sa nahrádza odporúčanie Rady z 28. júna 2011 o politikách na zníženie predčasného ukončovania školskej dochádzky, link

Welcoming and including all children in school (children from various ethnic, linguistic and ability background)

- VUDPAP, 2022. Manual for inclusion of a child speaking different mother tongue in education and counselling, link
- Štátny pedagogický ústav (NIVAM), 2022. Manuál pre inklúziu detí cudzincov do výchovno-vzdelávacieho procesu v Slovenskej republike, manual-inkluziu-deti-cudzincov.pdf Ministry of Education. Information about the situation of Ukrainian children in the Slovak education system, Všeobecné informácie | Ministerstvo školstva, výskumu, vývoja a mládeže Slovenskej republiky Video on Ukrainian young people in Slovakia on their struggles to be included in schools and communities - UNICEF iniciatíva "Pathways": Od poznania k praxi, link

Parental engagement

- UNICEF, 2025, Partneri v školách: Príručka pre spoluprácu rodičov a škôl, link
- VÚDPaP, 2023. Budovanie spolupráce s rodičom: Tvorba bezpečia vo vzťahoch, link

School Support Teams

- VÚDPaP, 2023. Školský podporný tím - Manuál pre riaditeľa školy, link

Other relevant material

- VÚDPaP, 2022. Prevencia a riešenie šikanovania: sprievodca pre školské prostredie, link
- VÚDPaP, 2023. Praktický manuál pre podporu žiakov ZŠ so špeciálnymi výchovno-vzdelávacími potrebami pri prechode na stredné školy bežného typu, link

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES IN ENGLISH:

Dropout prevention and early leaving

- UNICEF,2021. All children back in school – School Dropout Modules, link
- UNICEF, 2017. Early Warning System for Students at risk of Dropping out, link
- UNICEF, 2017. Improving Education Participation – Policy Pointers to reduce dropout, link
- European Commission,2015. Whole school approach for early school leaving, link

- European School Education Platform (search for dropout or early leaving), link
- VET toolkit for tackling early leaving, link

Parental engagement

- UNICEF, 2025. Partners in Schools: A Handbook for Parents and Schools Working Together, link

Welcoming and including all children in school (children from various ethnic, linguistic and ability background)

- UNHCR,2023. Education Policy Brief: Addressing barriers to learning among refugee children and youth from Ukraine, link
- OECD,2022. Supporting refugee students from Ukraine in host countries, link
- European Commission,2022. Supporting the inclusion of displaced children from Ukraine in education: Considerations, key principles and practices for the school year 2022-2023, link
- OECD, 2020. Inclusion of Roma Students in Europe: A literature review and examples of policy initiatives, link
- Council of Europe. Inclusive schools making a difference for Roma children, link
- European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2016. Early School Leaving and Learners with Disabilities and/or Special Educational Needs: A Review of the Research Evidence Focusing on Europe, link