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Project Paper 4

Methodological approach of the qualitative fieldwork

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Introduction

In the FP7-project Reducing Early School Leaving in Europe, a multi-method and multifaceted approach is fundamental to be able reveal the perspectives of the most important actors involved. Our primary focus is on the potential early school leavers (ESL'ers) and on the protective and risk factors positively or negatively influencing the process of early school leaving (ESL). While WP2 focuses on the policy level, and WP3 aims to give a broad overview and to study a large sample of potential ESL'ers, WP4 studies a smaller sample of respondents and focuses on the perspectives and strategies of youngsters but also of significant actors in the family, the school and the peer groups.

The RESL.eu-project addresses the situation of those **youngsters theoretically at risk of early school leaving**, based on the literature review and theoretical outline in Project Paper 2. Across different (national) settings, specific socio-demographic variables such as gender, migration background, socio-economic status, language proficiency, family composition and school composition and trajectory indicators are often related to the process of early school leaving. However, the RESL.eu-project aims to take the explanatory power of these risk indicators a step further and incorporate the notions of social and cultural capital and elements related to psychological and social well-being, resiliency and school engagement into the study of ESL. To address the social support networks of youngsters it is therefore important to study the interactions youngsters engage in with teachers, parents and peers.

Thus, theoretically and methodologically, the RESL.eu-project focuses on the level of the individual (the youngster, parent, teacher, peer) and the interactions occurring between individuals in different contexts given the resources available in these contexts (the family, the school, the peer groups and the broader community). Within this approach a strong emphasis is placed on the influence and role of the social and cultural capital of youngsters and their significant others (for more information on this, see project paper 2).

The **main objectives** of WP4 and the qualitative fieldwork and analysis are therefore:

1. To gain in-depth insight on an micro-individual and meso-institutional (family, school, community) level into the different mechanisms and processes that influence the process of ESL
2. To gain insight into and assess school policies on ESL - intra-muros good practices and understand the schools' openness to the EU and national policies on ESL
3. To identify and assess extra-muros good practices for tackling and compensating for ESL outside of the school

As mentioned, WP4 is primarily focused on **giving space to the voices and perspectives of those actors that are often marginalized**, mainly due to a lack of power. Youngsters in socially vulnerable circumstances in particular struggle with this, making them our main target group via whom we try to construct a broader understanding of the process of ESL. More in particular, we study three different categories of youngsters:

- those who remained or returned to education due to intra-muros interventions set-up by within the school, possibly in cooperation with external actors.
- those who left education early - before attaining an ISCED 3 level qualifications - and who pursued this ISCED 3 level qualifications via alternative learning arenas, i.e. compensatory measures tackling ESL;
- those who are not in Education, Employment or Training, the so-called NEET's, and did not obtain an ISCED 3 level qualification.

At the same time, WP4 is concerned with an **evaluation of the measures taken by schools and other organisations to tackle or compensate for ESL**. These measures can have an intervening and/or a compensatory nature, all with the threshold of reaching an ISCED 3 level qualification as a key target. Within the RESL.eu-project and due to feasibility reasons, we propose to define the intra-muros measures as those interventions taking place within the school environment. External partners can be involved in these measures, however the measure itself is executed within the school and the pupil is not taken out of the school for a longer period.

Within the RESL.eu-project we incorporate all three types of measures, preventive policy measures are studied within WP2, while WP4 focusses on interventions and compensation. As a consequence we will not only interview youngsters but will also interview and/or do focus groups with parents, peers, teachers and staff members all having (in)direct contact with the youngsters we study in WP4.

To summarize, in WP4 we study in-depth trajectories of the three specific categories of pupils mentioned above, while at the same time studying the projects or strategies developed in secondary schools (intra-muros) and alternative learning arenas (extra-muros) to tackle and compensate for ESL.

1. Guiding research questions for WP4

The main research questions the qualitative fieldwork will try to answer are:

On a **meso/ institutional level**: To what extent, and how, does access to social and cultural capital in different social environments influence school engagement and the process leading to ESL?

On a **micro/ individual level**: How do individual characteristics, educational trajectories, psychological traits and strategies influence school engagement and the process of ESL?

More in particular, we will study the mechanisms and processes that lead youngsters to leave – and/or prevent them from leaving – school or training early. Furthermore, we will focus on the trajectory of those who left education early and try to understand the decisions made and strategies developed after ESL. We try to clarify the role of social and cultural capital in these processes and reveal which kind of resources and support are available in the family, school, peer group and community. We try to reveal the perspectives of these youngsters and their significant others on ESL, their ideas about returning to mainstream education and their trajectories and experiences after ESL. Also, and this is linked to the third main research question, we focus on the reasons why some youngsters engage in an intra-muros measure or enrol in an extra-muros measure.

With respect to the **influence of intra- and extra-muros measures** designed and implemented to tackle ESL, the main question is: What intervention or compensation measures can be identified as successful in reducing ESL, with a focus on keeping ‘a pupil at risk of ESL’ in school, helping a pupil return to mainstream education and/or in guiding him/her to an alternative learning arena with the aim to obtain ISCED 3 level qualifications?

2. The selection and recruitment of respondents in WP4

When writing the proposal of the RESL.eu-project - as elaborated on in the description of work (see www.resl-eu.org) - it was our idea to do intake interviews with a larger group of pupils to collect descriptive data on each of them and to select a smaller sample of these youngsters for our qualitative fieldwork afterwards. However, by linking survey A1 in WP3 more directly with the research sample in WP4, we used the survey data of approximately 1500 pupils in one research area per partner country to make a selection of potential respondents for the qualitative fieldwork in WP4.

As such, the survey data will to a large extent guide the selection of the participants for WP4, while at the same time the nature of the qualitative methodology of WP4 also needs to allow for the recruitment of relevant profiles of participants 'emerging' from our fieldwork. To give room to the advantages of both research methods, we designed an updated outline of the fieldwork process, which we will now discuss in-depth.

The initial case selection in September 2014 links the survey A1 data collected during the spring of 2014 to the first qualitative data to be collected by the end of 2014. During this first period of the qualitative fieldwork, we focus on intra-muros measures in secondary schools that aim to reduce the risk of ESL. To be able to evaluate these measures we select at least 16 pupils spread over 4 schools in one of the two research areas per country who are theoretically at risk of ESL *but* who are still in school at the time of the fieldwork.

Furthermore, in the course of contacting these 16 pupils, we aim to establish a first contact-moment with around 8 youngsters per country – also theoretically at risk of ESL – that were in the same four selected schools during the time of Survey A1 but are no longer in secondary education and did not attain an ISCED 3 qualification in the meantime. Of these youngsters that can be identified as ESL'er, some will be contacted from October 2014 onwards, while some will be contacted starting from January 2015 (as this could also be an important period in the process of ESL).

However, given the fact that various potentially relevant youngsters did not complete survey A1 and potential difficulties we might experience in contacting and engaging youngsters in our project, the research partners can identify more potential ESL-youngsters at this stage if they want to.

Starting from September 2015 – when we start focussing on extra-muros initiatives and NEET youngsters – the qualitative research will allow for additional youngsters to enter the qualitative research in order to meet our final goal of studying 24 youngsters – by means of two in-depth interviews per youngster – during the course of the qualitative research, of which:

- 8 youngsters at risk of ESL but stayed in secondary schools (= focus on intra-muros initiatives)
- 8 youngsters who left secondary education early and afterwards enrolled in alternative learning arenas that can compensate for leaving secondary education early by allowing them to attain an ISCED 3 qualification (= focus on extra-muros initiatives)
- 8 youngsters who left secondary education early and are not involved in employment, education nor training (= focus on NEETs).

The **specific number of additional cases** that enter the fieldwork starting from September 2015 will depend on how the pupils of the initial case selection will populate the three groups of targeted cases presented above. This means that this side entry of additional cases starting from September 2015 will range from 0 to 16 case youngsters (0-8 in extra-muros measures and 0-8 NEETs). On the next page you can find a figure 1 that shows the global timeframe for the case selection of the qualitative research.

2.1 From WP3 survey data to WP4 case selection

In survey A1 a vast amount of new information on a large sample of respondents is collected (aiming for 3000 respondents per partner country, and approximately 1500 pupils per research area). For the fieldwork, data collection and analysis in WP4, we decided to focus on one research area only, allowing us to do broad and in-depth research and give a profound analysis of one particular educational context. The data collected in survey A1 concern topics such as the socio-demographic background of pupils, their family composition, their interactions and relations with significant others such as their parents, teachers, classmates and peers as well as a large amount of information on the youngsters' future aspirations and psycho-social measurement constructs such as school engagement, academic self-concept and perceived social support.

The information gathered by the survey gives us the opportunity to construct interesting and relevant profiles to inform the selection of pupils to contact for the interviews in WP4. The procedure of constructing these profiles and the selection of variables will be discussed in section 2.3.

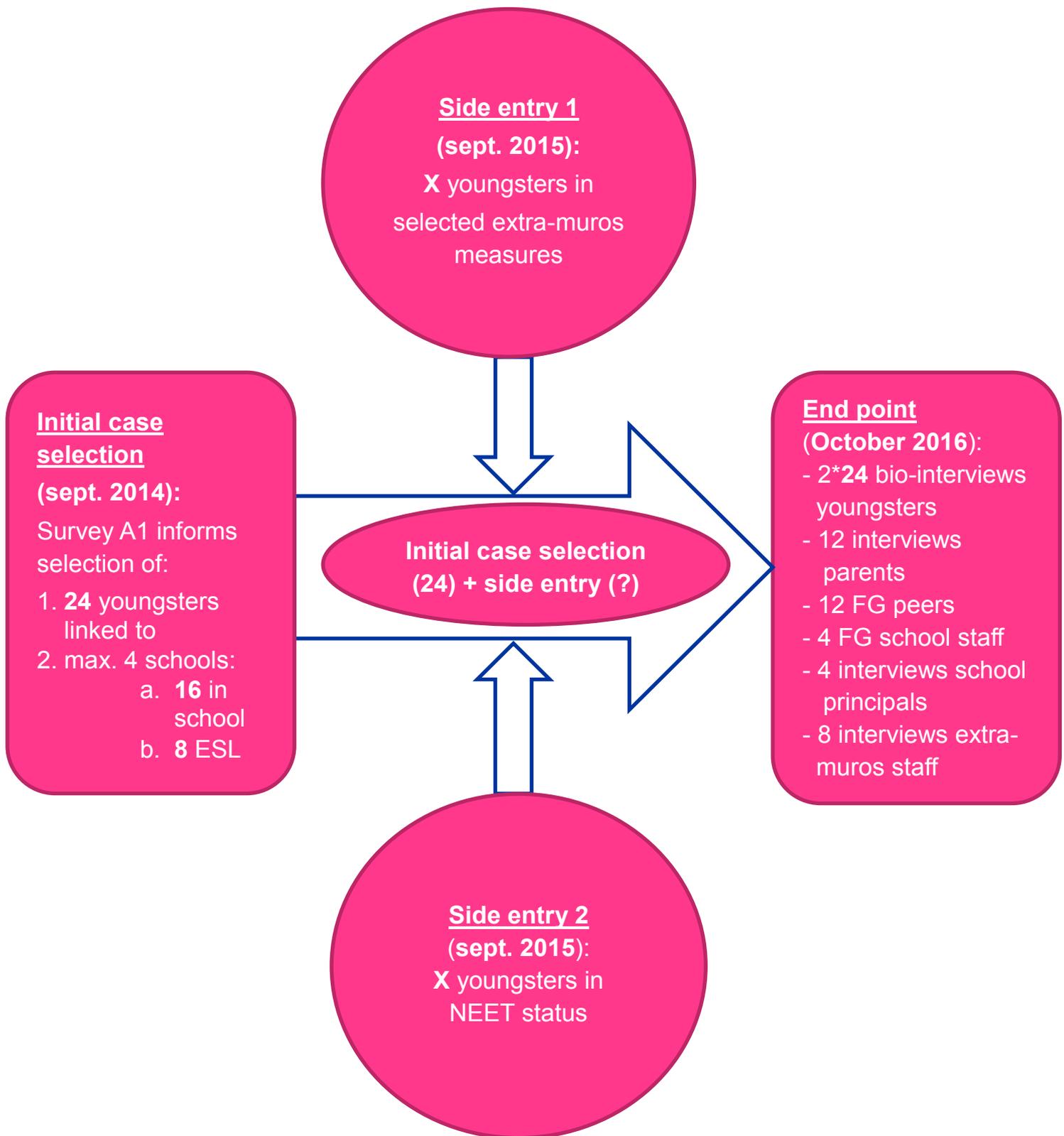
2.2 An updated fieldwork design and time frame: September 2014 - October 2016

Similar to the oversampling of respondents for survey A1, we do an (initial) oversampling of respondents for WP4, as it is to be expected that some youngsters will stop participating in our fieldwork as it covers a period of two years. While in the DOW we proposed to study 24 youngsters, we will now do 'first bio-interviews'¹ with a maximum of 40 youngsters (initial case selection (24) + side entry (0-16)) between 2014-2015 to end up with 24 youngsters in 2016 with whom we will have done at least 'second bio-interviews'. More concretely, these youngsters are incorporated at two different stages of the fieldwork. In September 2014 we make a first selection of 24 pupils and we allow a side-entry in September 2015 to have a sample of maximum 40 youngsters at that stage of the fieldwork. At the end of 2016 we aim to have done at least two interviews with 24 youngsters, whom we should be distributed into eight youngsters for each of the following three categories:

- those youngsters (8) who remained or returned to education due to intervening intra-muros activities set up by school policy makers;
- those youngsters (8) who left education early - before attaining an ISCED 3 level qualification - and who pursued this ISCED 3 level qualifications via alternative learning arenas, i.e. compensatory measures tackling ESL;
- those youngsters (8) who are not in Education, Employment or Training, and did not obtain an ISCED 3 level qualification, the so-called NEET's.

¹ While bio- or biographical interview is a broad and abstract concept, we propose to focus on constructing 'educational biographies' of these youngsters to get a broad and in-depth perspective on trajectories and experiences. Of course, this also implies studying the influences of the surrounding contexts and significant others.

Figure 1: Graphic representation of the WP4 fieldwork



The data gathered via survey A1 allows for selecting pupils that fit one of these categories. However, we cannot rely fully upon survey A1 for our initial selection. The NEET-category of youngsters in particular is difficult to recruit from the survey A1 sample. Also, the trajectories of these youngsters still have to unfold to a large extent making flexibility in our recruiting methods necessary. Moreover, given the dual perspective of the fieldwork of WP4 – creating a space for the voices of youngsters *and* evaluating intra-muros and extra-muros projects – we designed the following fieldwork outline.

In **September 2014 the initial case selection** of youngsters will be based upon data from survey A1, which was administered in the schools during the months February to June 2014. As the summer months can be an important period in the process of ESL, in September we have contact information of the 16 pupils that remained in school but also of the 8 pupils that left education early (in some cases we can wait for selection of these ESL youngsters until January 2015, as this could also be an important period in the process of ESL). We can derive this information from survey A1, however, since it is to be expected that especially those pupils at risk of ESL will have not completed the survey, there is then room to contact more pupils emerging from the fieldwork. Moreover, at that point it is, of course, unclear what the next steps will be in the trajectory of the youngsters. Some will remain in school, of those in school in September 2014 some may leave education in the following weeks or months, while of those who became ESL'er during the summer period some may return to education or enrol in an alternative learning arena (an extra-muros project). To allow for these unpredictable actions to be taken into consideration during our fieldwork, we select **24 youngsters** of whom 16 in September 2014 that are in regular secondary education and of whom 8 in January 2015 for those who are ESL.

Furthermore, dividing up the fieldwork in such a way it also allows us to meet the first deadline of the project in May 2015, the **evaluation of the intra-muros** measures. This is possible as most of the 16 youngsters we recruited in September 2014 are enrolled in schools that are selected based upon their policy towards ESL (or the absence thereof) and/or the specific projects they set up to tackle ESL (or the absence thereof). As such, this initial selection of pupils not only builds further upon the data collected in survey A1 but at the same time also informs the parallel research phase of intra-muros evaluation. The selection of intra-muros measures is discussed under heading 3.1.

In a **next phase** of respondent recruitment in **September 2015** a dual approach is again applied. In a first step, a new 'status update' of the 24 respondents from our initial case selection (in September 2014 and January 2015) will be made. Of these 24 youngsters we will know if they are in or returned to main mainstream education, if they are enrolled in an alternative learning arena (extra-muros measure), or if they can be identified as NEET. Depending on the division of these 24 youngsters across these three categories, a new side-entry of youngsters is prepared. The focus will probably be to recruit youngsters in the NEET or the extra-muros category. However, this depends on the status of the initial 24 youngsters.

From then onwards, our focus will be on executing the first interviews with these youngsters in the extra-muros projects (whether they are from our initial case selection or from the side-entry in September 2015) and of the new side-entry of NEET's. This will allow us to make an **in-depth evaluation of a selection of extra-muros projects** by May 2016. The interviews with new NEET's will be executed in this period, however, their main analysis will be carried out in the subsequent

phase, as this current phase (September 2015 - May 2016) is primarily concerned with the evaluation of extra-muros projects.

In the **final phase** of the fieldwork and analysis in WP4, we carry out second interviews with all pupils involved in the fieldwork, with the aim to do at least two interviews with 8 youngsters in each of the three categories we outlined above. All the findings will be brought together in Deliverable 4.2 in January 2017.

2.3 Procedure for the initial case selection in September 2014

The initial case selection is largely build on the survey data collected during the spring of 2014. Based on a selection of most relevant variables to determine different profiles of pupils who are theoretically at risk of ESL, the youngsters questioned in Survey A1 are listed according to their match with specific risk profiles. Furthermore, lists of the schools visited for Survey A1 data collection were provided to each partner and contained the number of pupils that match each risk profile alongside the aggregated mean of teacher support experienced by all surveyed pupils in a specific school. Over the next pages, the envisaged initial case selection procedure will be unveiled phase by phase.

Phase 1: Aggregation of databases

In order to start the initial selection of cases for the qualitative research, the different databases collected by the Resl.eu partners needed to be aggregated and put in the format of the projects' master pupil database.

Phase 2: Selection of variables and data cleaning

Once we established the full project database, we started to look into the data and selected the most relevant variables to develop risk profiles. By doing so, we linked the WP4 case selection with the most essential concepts in the Resl.eu theoretical framework (WP1) and with general and country-specific risk indicators from empirical research on ESL (WP3 phase I: exploration of existing ESL statistics). Indicators measuring the following concepts and risk profiles were selected:

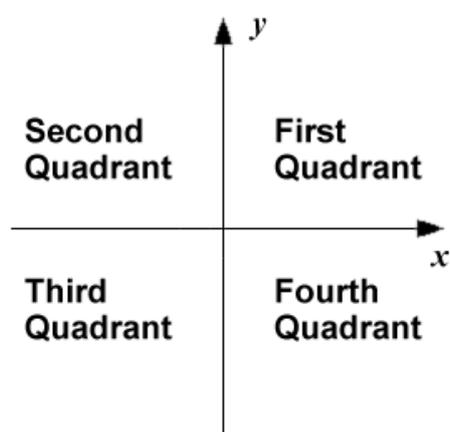
- **School engagement** as a multi-dimensional concept: indicators measuring emotional, behavioural and cognitive school engagement
- **Social capital:** indicators measuring the support youngsters experience in their social network. We distinguish between support received from parents, peers and teachers
- **Socio-demographic and educational background variables:** a selection of the most important risk indicators from (country-specific) ESL statistics

Measurements of school engagement and social capital concepts were strongly represented in Survey A1 and almost exclusively based on existing measurement scales. All relevant scale items were already explored in an explorative factor analyses on the preliminary data collected online and the results showed that the expected measurement scales matched our data quite well and produced reliable operationalization of these central theoretical concepts. Further multivariate analyses were used to develop the final constructs of survey items for the measurement of school engagement and social support.

Furthermore, all partners were asked to give input on the most important socio-demographic and educational background variables to determine risk profiles of pupils at risk of ESL for their specific country and research area context. We aimed to have a clear picture of which groups are overrepresented in national and/ or local ESL statistics in order to develop context specific risk profiles based on existing statistics on ESL.

Phase 3: producing lists of theoretically at risk youngsters

The initial case selection for the qualitative research was built primarily on pupils' levels of school engagement and the support they expressed to experience in their social environment (= from parents and peers). Based on the measurement scales mentioned above, all pupils were scored on their school engagement and social support. According to these levels, all pupils were matched to one of the following quadrants in a coordinate system where the x-axis is the mean score for social support and the y-axis is the mean score for school engagement:



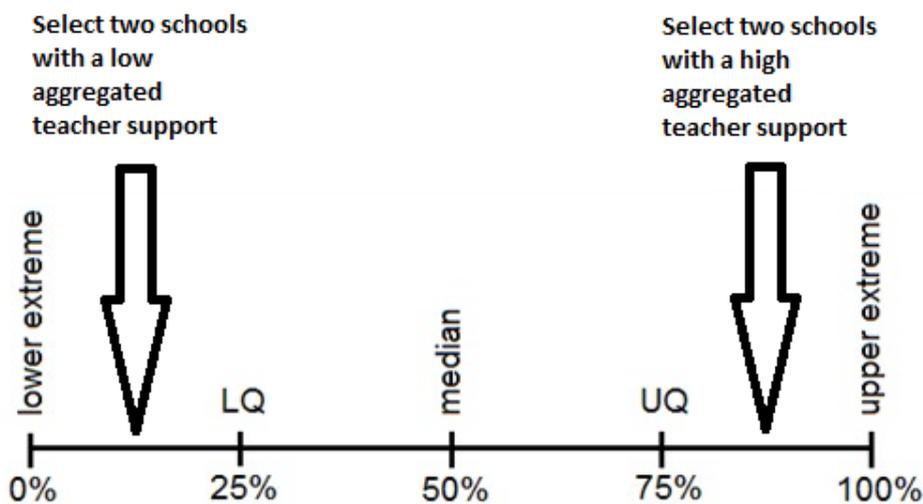
- **First Quadrant:** high school engagement and high social support
- **Second Quadrant:** high school engagement and low social support
- **Third Quadrant:** low school engagement and low social support
- **Fourth Quadrant:** low school engagement and high social support

Once all pupils are allocated to a specific quadrant, lists will be established per quadrant in which the pupils are ranked according to their levels of school engagement and social support. Pupils highest on each list can be perceived as archetypical for this particular quadrant. Our final goal will be to select and recruit respondents as high up these lists as possible. For each quadrant we want to select at least one youngster from *one* at risk group and at least one *not in any* at risk group. We make an exception for the high engagement/ high support quadrant, where we do not want to select respondents not from an at risk group, since this group is theoretically least at risk of ESL.

To summarize, we planned to select cases from seven different groups according to their levels of school engagement and social support in combination with (not) having an at risk profile for ESL. We believed that those with high levels of school engagement and social support who are not categorized as belonging to an at-risk group would render the least interesting information and these survey A1 respondents were therefore excluded from the qualitative research. Ideally the selection of the total 24 pupils in the initial case selection would be equally dispersed over these seven groups but for pragmatic and possible country specific reasons, we preferred to leave this decision open for each partner to decide, as long as all seven groups are represented in the case selection.

Phase 4: Selection of schools

Once we established the lists of ranked youngsters per quadrant, youngsters from each list were counted per school. Next to the representation of specific targeted groups of cases per school, we presented aggregated levels of teacher support per school. These aggregated levels of teacher support show how all surveyed pupils in this particular school feel supported by their teachers. We then presented the schools per *quartile* of aggregated teacher support and encouraged all partners to select two schools in the lowest and two schools in the highest quartiles.



To sum up, each partner was provided a list with all schools in the research area chosen for WP4 data collection. The schools were ranked by their level of aggregated teacher support; cut-off points per quartiles of aggregated teacher support were presented. Per school, a count of youngsters belonging to each quadrant and at risk groups were also presented to further inform each partner's selection process.

Of course we were well aware that selecting schools from this list had to be approached in a pragmatic way. The list of schools with information on the number of pupils per quadrant and the aggregated level of teacher support merely served as an information tool. Each partner had to check if a school was willing to cooperate in this phase of the research and – very importantly – at least some level intervention to reduce the risk of ESL needed to be in place in at least two of these schools.

Phase 5: Producing lists of potential WP4 respondents per school

After selecting four schools that were willing to cooperate in the first phase of the qualitative data collection (October – December 2014), each partner was provided with four lists of potential respondents. The potential respondents were allocated to one of the four lists by the quadrant of school engagement and social support levels to which the youngster belongs. Each list contained the name of their (former) school (*i.e.* one of the four selected schools) and the selected socio-demographic and educational background variables in order to distinguish between those having and those not having a risk profile.

Starting from the beginning of October 2014, each partner could begin contacting the potential respondents starting from the top of each list in order to find at least one youngster with and one youngster without a risk profile for ESL per list (with the exception of the youngsters without a risk profile in the high engagement/ high support quadrant). In total, each team is supposed to find at least 16 cooperating respondents who are still enrolled in one of the four selected schools and 8 respondents who were enrolled in the four selected schools at the time of survey A1 but who left secondary education and did not attain an ISCED 3 qualification in the meantime. Although methodologically, it is preferred that the cooperating respondents from each group were more or less evenly distributed over the four cooperating schools, for pragmatic reasons we urged each partner to find at least one cooperating respondent per selected school that is still enrolled and one respondent who has left education early at the time of the first contact starting from September 28.

3. The evaluation of measures tackling ESL

However, as mentioned, the selection of the youngsters is one aspect of WP4. Besides this, we want to do an evaluation of intra- and extra-muros activities, which implies we will also interview and study specific significant others within the social networks of these youngsters.

While WP4 is concerned with creating a space for the voices of the three categories of youngsters we selected, at the same time, it aims to evaluate actions taken or projects designed to tackle or compensate for ESL. These measures can focus on intervention before ESL and/or on compensation after ESL. As it is difficult to do a pre-assessment and post-evaluation of measures since they will already have been implemented at the time the fieldwork is carried out, we propose to do an adapted theory-driven evaluation of the selected measures (Hansen & Vedung, 2010)². This implies that the measure is evaluated based on two types of analysis:

- an analysis of the available documents (e.g. school policy on ESL, design of the specific measures, administrative data on resource allocation for the measure), and;
- an analysis of perspectives of the stakeholders engaged in the measure itself.

Based on this information, 'programme theories' are designed which are an explicit articulation of the theoretical assumptions underlying the measures. As the *designers* are the primary constructors of the measures, they are the basic group to start from when re- and deconstructing the measures. Important questions are: Why is the measure designed? What is the target audience? Who are the implementers? What are the expected outcomes? What are the resources allocated? As mentioned, answers to these questions enable us to reconstruct the program theory of the measures: i.e. the designers' theoretical assumptions behind tackling ESL.

While the designers of a measure are the starting point of the evaluation process, the perspectives (and actions) of other stakeholders need to be involved as well, if one wants to make an in-depth evaluation. As such, next to the designers, implementers and recipients of the measures are equally important. An intra-muros measure could have as designers the school principal(s) and other management staff, as implementers the teaching and support staff and as recipients the pupils and/or parents. However, each of these participants has an active role in this process and influences the measure itself, as well as its implementation and outcomes.

The construction and implementation of an innovative practice or measure is not a neutral process. Therefore, it is not primarily the design of the measure in policy documents or official communication that is essential, but the interpretation of the different aspects of a measure by the stakeholders involved. This interpretation determines to what extent the measure will have an effect on the actions of stakeholders. This implies that also with respect to the potential of measures to be transferred to different (national & educational) contexts, it is necessary to document and analyse the meanings and interpretations that actors give to the measure.

To evaluate these measures it is interesting to collect data on specific crucial elements of the measure. Different researchers have listed the following elements that can or should be considered when constructing an evaluation of a measure (Fullan, 2008; Rogers, 2003; Van den Branden, 2009):

² Hansen, M. B. & Vedung, E. (2010). Theory-based Stakeholder Evaluation. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 31 (3): 295-313.

- (a) **Aim:** what is the aim of the measure in a school? On which level of the school processes or actors is it focused?
- (b) **Problem orientation:** the degree to which the measures connects with the problems or issues the stakeholders themselves experience and voice? How strong is the (mis)match between the measure and what stakeholders perceive as the measure that should be implemented?
- (c) **Scope:** What is the scope of the measure: the school level, the class level, the pupil level, home level, neighborhood level or a combination of these levels?
- (d) **Feasibility:** to what extent are the aims of the measure achievable and feasible?
- (e) **Concreteness:** How concrete is the measure for the stakeholder? Is there sufficient information available? Can stakeholders paint a clear picture of what the aim and outcomes of the measure are?
- (f) **Participation and ownership:** the degree to which the stakeholder is involved in the decision process with respect to the measure? The extent to which the stakeholder has the chance to shape the design and implementation of the measure?
- (g) **Support:** to what extent does the stakeholder feel supported within the context of his/her role in the measure?
- (h) **Outcome experience:** to what extent does the stakeholders have knowledge of the effects of the measure? To what extent has it achieved the intended success? To what extent does the stakeholder feel s/he made a difference?

Probably not all elements and questions can be checked with all stakeholders involved, as they have no information on this. However it is necessary to reconstruct all perspectives involved as broadly and deeply as possible.

The data collection necessary to do an evaluation of these measures is part of the data collection to do an analysis of the process of ESL. Therefore, youngsters, parents, teachers and peers are interviewed not only on ESL but simultaneously on the measures they are enrolled in (with the exception of NEET's).

3.1 Procedure to select intra-muros intervention measures

Within the context of the RESL.eu-project, the categorization of measures is made between intra-muros measures implemented within the school and extra-muros measures implemented outside of the school. In general, the measures designed to address the issue of ESL can focus on prevention, intervention or compensation. Various EU-documents discussing measures with respect to ESL apply the following definitions:

- **Preventive measures** are defined as:

“strategies that seek to tackle the problem even before the first symptoms of it are visible. They look at pre-conditions for successful schooling and the design of education and training systems. The aim is to remove systematic obstacles. Preventive strategies centre on early childhood education and care and structural features within education and training systems.” (Commission Staff, 2010: 15; see also WG-ESL, 2013: 18).

- **Intervention** measures are defined as:

*intra-muros measures (or within the school context, with or without the help external actors) and divided into two categories: namely **school-wide** and **student-focused** strategies and aim “to avoid ESL by improving the quality of education and training and to provide targeted support to pupils or groups of pupils at risk. School-wide strategies address all pupils, but are especially beneficial to those at risk of dropping-out. They look at school development in general, early warning systems and networks with outside actors to support the work of the school. Student-focused strategies build on early detection of support needed for learning and motivation and take a multi-professional and holistic approach in addressing them, and provide individual guidance and support.” (Commission Staff, 2010: 23; see also WG-ESL, 2013: 21).*

- **Compensation** measures are defined as:

those measures “creating opportunities for those who left education and training prematurely, but want to gain the qualifications they missed at a later stage in their life. The aim is also to reintegrate young adults in danger of social exclusion by offering a range of tailor-made education and training opportunities.” (Commission Staff, 2010: 33; see also WG-ESL, 2013: 22).

As mentioned before, the RESL.eu-project is limited in its scope to evaluate measures. A relevant starting point is therefore to focus within the scope of intra-muros intervention measures, on school-wide or student-focused measures. In some cases a measure could be a comprehensive or holistic approach designed at a school-wide level and encompassing all pupils, while in other cases, specific targeted measures could be designed that focus solely or primarily on pupils at-risk of ESL.

Based on the profiles of pupils for WP4, the selection of the schools for the fieldwork and on the presence (or absence) of measures tackling ESL (information that is collected during field experience and knowledge) and on the specificities of the different educational systems and policies, each partner proposes a selection of relevant measures to be studied. This selection could be balanced in such a way that school-wide and student-focused measures can be evaluated. This allows for comparison of measures within and across countries as they are selected based on similar criteria.

Due to feasibility reasons, we propose to define the intra-muros measures within the RESL.eu-project as those interventions taking place within the school environment. External partners can be involved in these measures, however the measure itself is executed within the school and the pupil is not taken out of the school for a long period.

With respect to extra-muros or compensating measures, various partner countries have a form of second chance learning opportunities, or develop individually tailored measures that focus on the re-integration of youngsters into mainstream education or offer a combination of work-education programmes.

4. An overview of the fieldwork to be carried out in WP4

4.1 Period to deadline May 2015: Evaluation of intra-muros measures

The initial period of the fieldwork in WP4 starts in September 2014 and focuses on the first interviews with the youngsters involved in the project and aims to deliver the evaluation of the intra-muros measures by the end of May 2015. As mentioned in section 2, we have selected a first group of pupils which will be expanded in the subsequent phases of the research.

We propose to collect one part of the fieldwork data between October 2014 and December 2014. The following months are used to analyse the material and write the country report. By the end of September 2014 we are able to select 16 pupils that are still in school and to select 4 schools wherein these pupils will be interviewed.

Besides this, 8 youngsters will be selected that are identified as ESL in September-October 2014 (or January 2015). With those 8 youngsters a first contact moment will be established to collect some information but also to gain their trust and participation in the project for subsequent interviews. Along with this **group of 24 youngsters**, a smaller sample of **significant others** are studied.

However, for feasibility reasons and to meet the deadline for project paper 6 in May 2014, only 8 pupils of these 16 will be interviewed in the period October-December 2014 and these data will be used for the evaluation of the intra-muros measures. The other 8 youngsters of the 16 still in school will be interviewed starting January 2015 and before the end of June 2015. The 8 youngsters recruited as ESL'er will also be interviewed in the period January-June 2015.

To summarize, the total amount of fieldwork, which we plan to execute within the four selected schools in the period from September to December 2014, entails the following:

- 8 bio-interviews with youngsters still in school (ideally 4 schools with 4 pupils per school)
- 4 Focus group discussions with staff in school (at least 1 per school)
- 4 Focus group discussions with classmates in school (at least 1 per school)
- 4 in-depth interviews with parents from pupils still in selected schools (at least 1 per school)
- 1 interview with the principal of the school

As Project Paper 6 on the cross-country analyses has to be delivered in May 2015, the country reports on the evaluation of the intra-muros measures need to be delivered by Mid-March 2015 to the coordinating team CeMIS-UAntwerp. These reports focus primarily on the evaluation of the intra-muros measures.

It should be noted that in the period January-June 2015, interviews need to be carried out with the remaining 8 youngsters that were in school (selected in September 2014) and with the 8 youngsters identified as ESL'er (selected in September 2014 or January 2015). This information will not be used for project paper 6 (Intra-muros evaluation) or project paper 7 (Extra-muros evaluation) but is necessary to understand the process of ESL and will be analysed and reported in Deliverable 4.2 in January 2017.

4.2 Period up to deadline May 2016: Evaluation of extra-muros measures

The second phase of fieldwork in WP4 is concerned with an evaluation of extra-muros measures. In this phase we select youngsters that left school early and are enrolled in an extra-muros measure to obtain their ISCED 3 level qualifications.

To construct this sample of youngsters, we first return to our initial selection of 24 youngsters in September-October 2014. Of these 24, the majority (16 youngsters) were still enrolled in school and 8 others were at that time early school leavers or became ESL by January 2015. In September 2015 a new status update is made of these 24 youngsters to see who is still in school or returned to mainstream education; who enrolled in an extra-muros measure and who is or became a NEET.

Depending on this update, additional youngsters are recruited that are enrolled in an extra-muros measure or are NEET, to reach a total of 8 youngsters in each of our three categories (intra-muros; extra-muros; NEET). Similar to the previous fieldwork period, significant others are also studied during this period. The main focus of this period is on the collection of new data to make an in-depth evaluation of extra-muros measures, resulting in a new Project Paper 7 by May 2016.

Four selected compensatory extra-muros measures³ (selected by the end of August 2015) will be studied during the fieldwork period from September to December 2015. The fieldwork entails the following:

- First bio-interviews of the side entry of additional youngsters in these measures to reach a total of 8 youngsters in these measures in September – December 2015;
- 8 interviews with staff members from measures (2 interviews per measure)
- 4 focus group discussions with peers in extra-muros measures (1 per measure)
- 4 in-depth interviews with parents of youngsters in extra-muros measures (1 per measure)

As Project Paper 7 on the cross-country analyses has to be delivered in May 2016, the country reports on the evaluation of the extra-muros measures need to be delivered by Mid-March 2016 to the coordinating team CeMIS-UAntwerp. These reports focus primarily on the evaluation on the extra-muros measures. Deliverable 4.1 is also presented by the end of May 2016

4.3 Period to deadline January 2017: In-depth analysis of the process of ESL

The final fieldwork period in WP4 overlaps with the previous periods and starts in September 2015 and ends in October 2016. It aims to deliver an in-depth analysis of the process of ESL and therefore incorporates all the data collected during the previous fieldwork periods to reconstruct the process of ESL, primarily from the perspective of the youngsters involved. Special attention is given to the NEET-youngsters who up until now were not incorporated in the two previous Project Papers, as these were concerned with the evaluation of the measures.

To reconstruct the sample of youngsters we start from the initial case selection in September 2014 of 24 youngsters and the side-entry of youngsters in September 2015. In the course of the fieldwork we have recruited and followed-up with a maximum of 40 youngsters, of which we will interview 24 again before October 2016. In WP4 we aim to do **at least two in-depth interviews with 24 youngsters**: 8 involved in an intra-muros measure; 8 involved in an extra-muros measure and 8 categorized as NEET.

³ As this selection is scheduled for the summer of 2015 the discussion on the selection is postponed to a later stage.

To summarize, the data collection necessary to conclude WP4, and more in particular with respect to the 8 NEET's:

- 2 bio-interviews with 8 NEET's
- 4 focus group discussions with their peers (1 FGD per 2 NEET's)
- 4 interviews with parents (1 interview per 2 NEET's)

All qualitative data collection and analyses informs Deliverable 4.2, which has to be presented at the end of January 2017 (Deliverable 4.2). Therefore, all the country reports need to be sent to the coordinating team CeMIS-UAntwerp by November 2016.