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## PLÉNIÈRE 2

AGIR AVANT LA RUPTURE :  
COMMENT INTERVENIR FACE AU  
RISQUE DE DÉCROCHAGE SCOLAIRE ?

9 & 10 NOVEMBRE 2017

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**A Cross-case Analysis of School-based  
Prevention and Intervention Measures:  
findings from the RESL.eu project**

**Lore Van Praag**  
University of Antwerp  
RESL.eu project

9 & 10 NOVEMBRE 2017

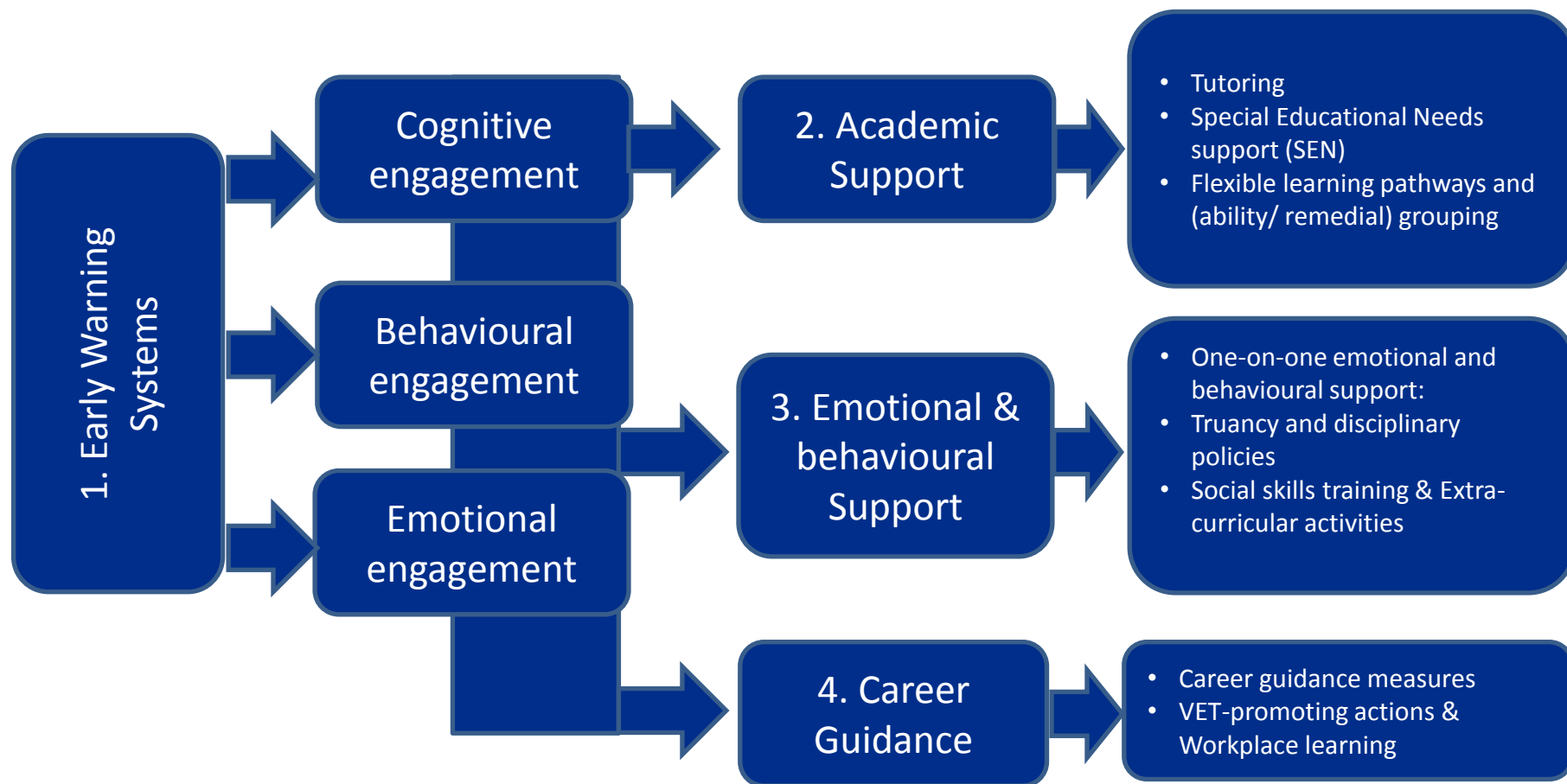
## RESL.eu project (@RESL\_eu)

- 10 partner countries (WU, EUR, UW, UPorto, UAB, UA, SU, MU, SU, CEU)
- Cross-case analysis of 48 school-based prevention and intervention measures in 28 focus schools across 7 EU countries: Belgium, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Portugal, the United Kingdom, Sweden
- 7th Framework Programme, European Commission

## **Methods**

- Pre-assessment and post-evaluation of the interventions not feasible
- Adapted theory-driven stakeholder evaluation method (Hansen & Vedung, 2010)
- Studying the discursive congruence between designers, implementers and target group on:
  - Awareness about scope and aims, problem orientation and concreteness of measures
  - Participation: (Reasons for) participation and sense of ownership
  - Outcome experience: Effectiveness, feasibility and support
- Qualitative data collection: 166 semi-structured interviews & Focused Group Discussions (FGD's)

# ➤ A typology of measures



# Early Warning Systems

- School-wide Detection and Monitoring systems
- Reducing ESL is often a secondary effect but not the primary focus
- A multidimensional school engagement approach
- Focus on 'problematic' educational trajectories
- Often organized by governmental agencies & mandatory
- Frequent use of digital platform
- Few focus on emotional well-being
- More need for support and professionalization of school staff
- Danger of stigmatizing group at risk of ESL

## Academic support

- Start: individual cognitive needs students
- Part of general school programme, core task education, not directly linked to ESL
- Expected participation school staff, voluntary participation of students
- 3 types:
  - Support students with learning difficulties
  - Student differentiation and flexible pathways
  - Support understanding of curricula
- Visible short term effects
- Danger of stigmatisation when labelling students as at risk of ESL
- Problems often related to problematic home situation
- Individual & voluntary approach: vulnerable students?
- Increasing work load school staff (~financial cuts)

# Emotional and behavioral support

- Proactive (prevention) vs reactive (intervention)
- Stepwise vs structural care approach
  - Further guides role of teachers in care approach
- Specialised ‘caring’ school personnel
- Different levels of professionalisation of school teams
- Importance of empathic potential and social skills of teachers
- Objectives of care personnel not always clear for students; mistrust by students
- Need for care vs focus on the curricula
- Focus on observable symptoms (e.g. truancy, behavior)
- No voluntary participation



## Career guidance support

- Realistic educational choices -> motivation
- Related to labour market opportunities
- Information provision and support when making individual choices (also VET, etc.)
- ‘Compensation’ for lack of support at home
- Variation with regard to intensity, importance of the parents’ role, specialised personnel and mainly teachers
- More need for individualised guidance
- Limited to provision of information, no focus on aspirations, expectations, feasibility, etc.

## Contextual preconditions

- Addressing basic needs of students
- Promoting parental involvement
- Promoting professional development and support of staff
- Promoting supportive student-teacher relationships
- Taking on a holistic multi-professional approach
- Promoting student voice and ownership

# ➤ Compensation measures (1/2)

- Societal level:
  - « Option B »: less esteemed options/qualifications
  - Variation in the governmental organisation of these measures
  - Lack of unification across countries
  - Lack of clear ideas of what qualifications stand for on the labour market

## Compensation measures (2/2)

### ■ Institutional level:

#### PROS

- Use of a holistic approach
- Expertise with students with problematic school careers and difficult home situations
- Diversified staff corps

#### CONS

- Only enrollment after 'failure' in mainstream education
- Do not change problematic school careers in mainstream education

## Discussion

- What works and what does not?
- Prevention and intervention vs compensation
- Nature of processes leading to ESL
- Structural reforms educational systems?
  
- Education of/for the future?

# Final international conference

- Findings of the RESL.eu project and other international contributions
- Keynote speakers: Prof. Dr. Paul Downes & Prof. Dr. Russell W. Rumberger
- Antwerp, University of Antwerp, 22-24th of January 2017
- <https://www.uantwerpen.be/en/projects/resl-eu/about-resl-eu/events/>

# RESL.eu project

- More information:

<https://www.uantwerpen.be/en/projects/resl-eu/about-resl-eu/>

- PP6: Cross-case Analysis of School-based Prevention and Intervention Measures:

<https://www.uantwerpen.be/en/projects/resl-eu/deliverables/resl-eu-project-pape/>

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# First steps forward in the fight against early school leaving

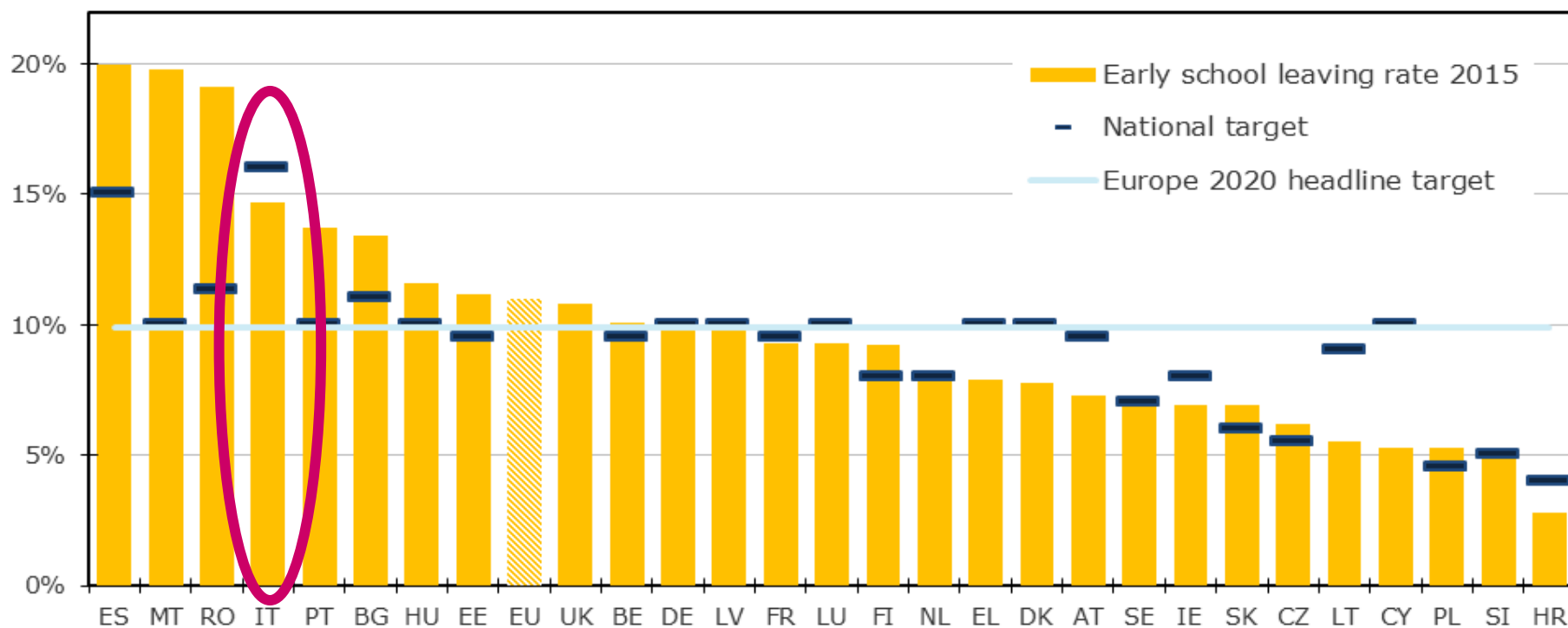
**Maddalena Colombo**

Associate Professor of Educational Sociology  
Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milan

9 & 10 NOVEMBRE 2017

## > Current early school leaving rates

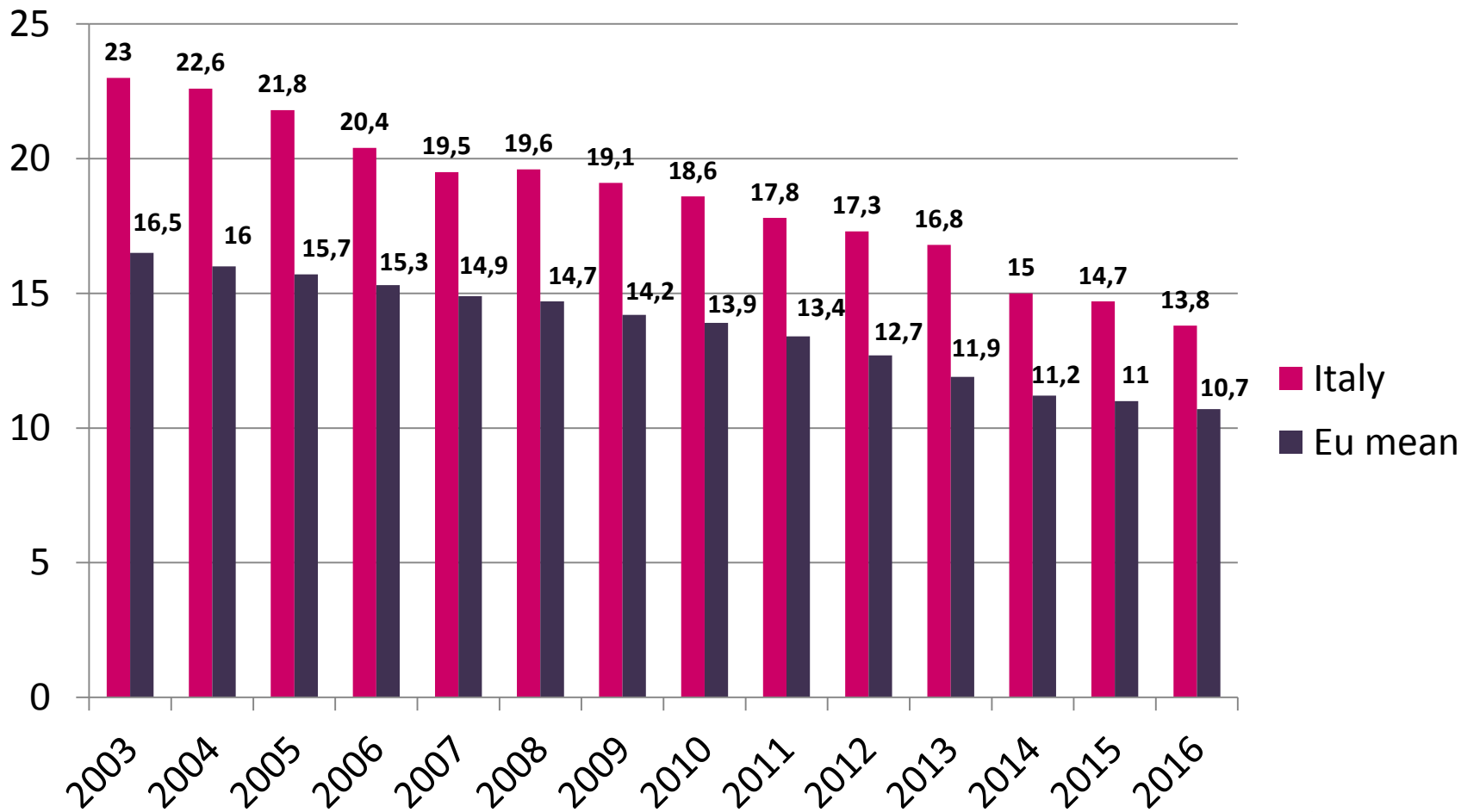
- More than 4 million young people (18-24 year olds) across EU28 countries are considered early school leavers (ESL)
- Only 40% of these young people are employed



Eurostat (LFS, table [t2020\_40])



# Change in the ESL rate among 18-24 year olds in Italy, 2003-2016



Source: Eurostat

# Reducing ESL : Europe 20/20 headline target

**Statistical definition :** *The share of the population aged 18 to 24 years old that has not received a qualification from completing upper secondary education and was not enrolled in further education or training during the four weeks preceding the survey.*

## High ESL rates are:

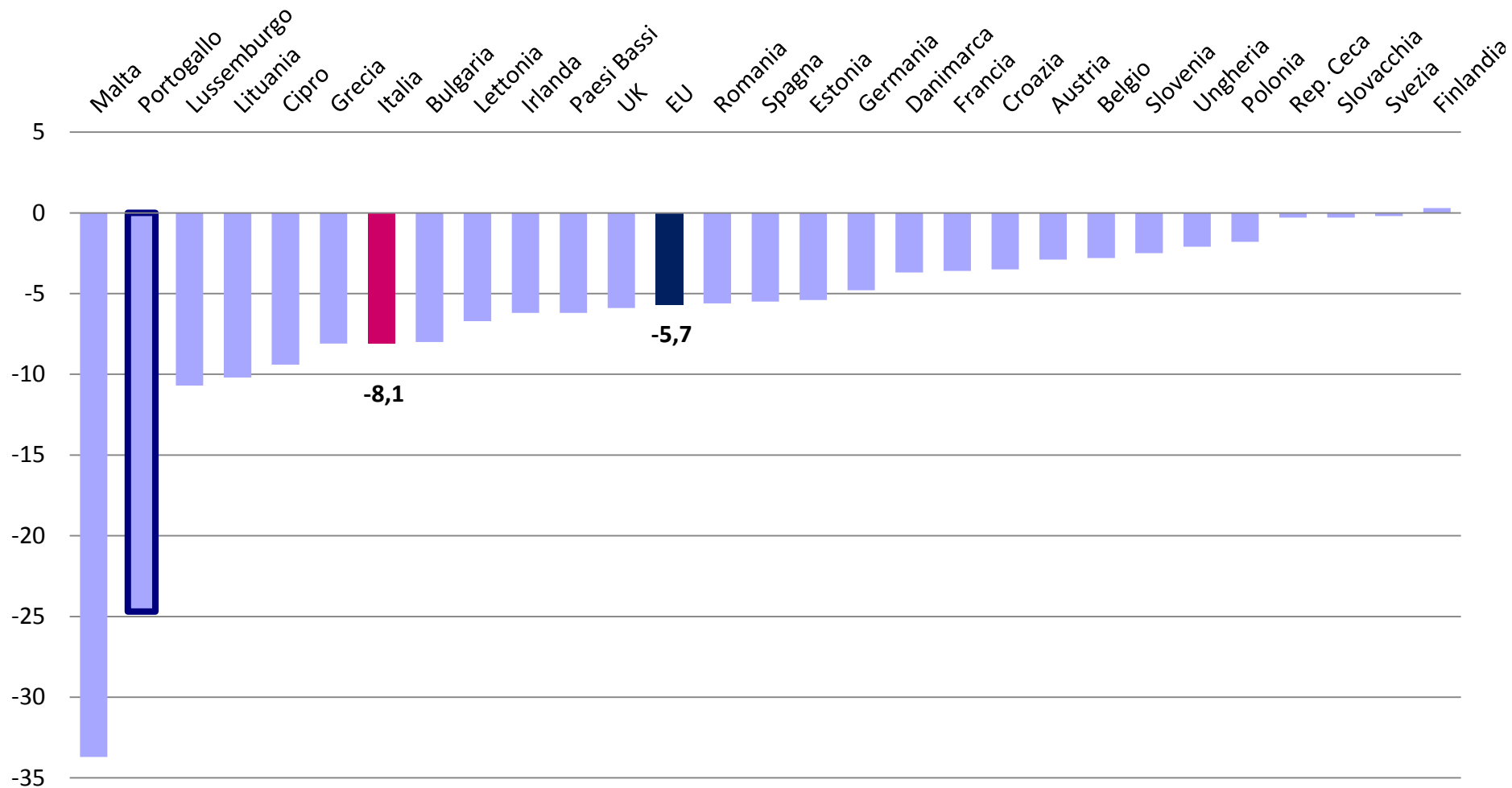
- A waste of educational investments, which go to benefit only a portion of the population
- A betrayal of the main objective of *public* education, which is to give citizens equal opportunities to succeed

## Reducing ESL rates is associated with improvements in:

- The social economic status of educated individuals
- A country's competitiveness globally
- Enrolment rates in tertiary education



# Percentage point net change in ESL rates among 18-24 year olds in selected European countries, 2000 - 2013



Source: Eurostat



# ESL: Current performance and recent change



**Source:** European semester thematic factsheet early school leavers, DG EAC calculations based on Eurostat (LFS, data table [t2020\_40]).

**Note:** EU Member States having already reached their national targets are depicted in yellow.

## ➤ The strange case of Italy

- Over the long term → there seems to have been significant positive effects from measures to reduce ESL as a result of huge economic investments from European Social Fund and Operative National Program budgets (275 million Euro)

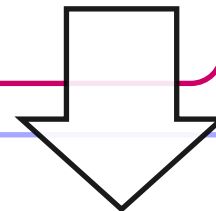
### HOWEVER

- It is not known which levers have contributed to this result because there is a lack of:
  - Explicit and comprehensive policy measures
  - Cost-benefit analyses, student and teacher assessments, and follow-up studies
  - Evidence-based evaluations allowing us to learn from our actions

# Three facets of the fight against ESL

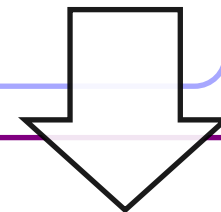
## 1. **STRATEGIC LEVEL RESPONSES**

Monitoring; coordination between measures...



## 2. **PREVENTION STRATEGIES**

Targeted, structural measures; innovations to teaching practices; teacher training; guidance activities...



## 3. **INTERVENTION & REINTEGRATION STRATEGIES**

Second chance classes; services and support for at-risk students and NEETS; school-work vouchers or checks...

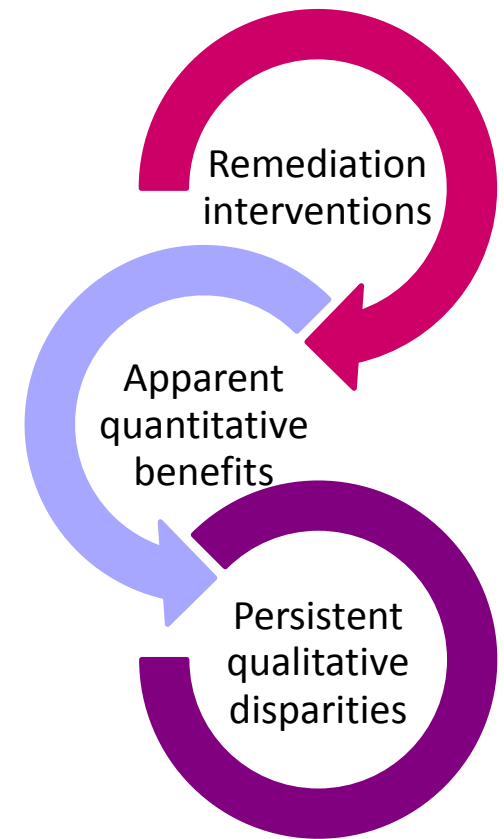


## Prevention strategies at the national level in Italy

1. In 2007, Italy raised the minimal school leaving age to 16 years old in line with much of the rest of the European Union
2. Also in 2007, Italy changed the structure of secondary education to add a second pathway to incorporate initial professional education
3. Since 2004, Italy has been strongly promoting early school entry for children starting at 5 years old (school is mandatory at 6 years old)

# ➤ Remediation interventions at the school level in Italy

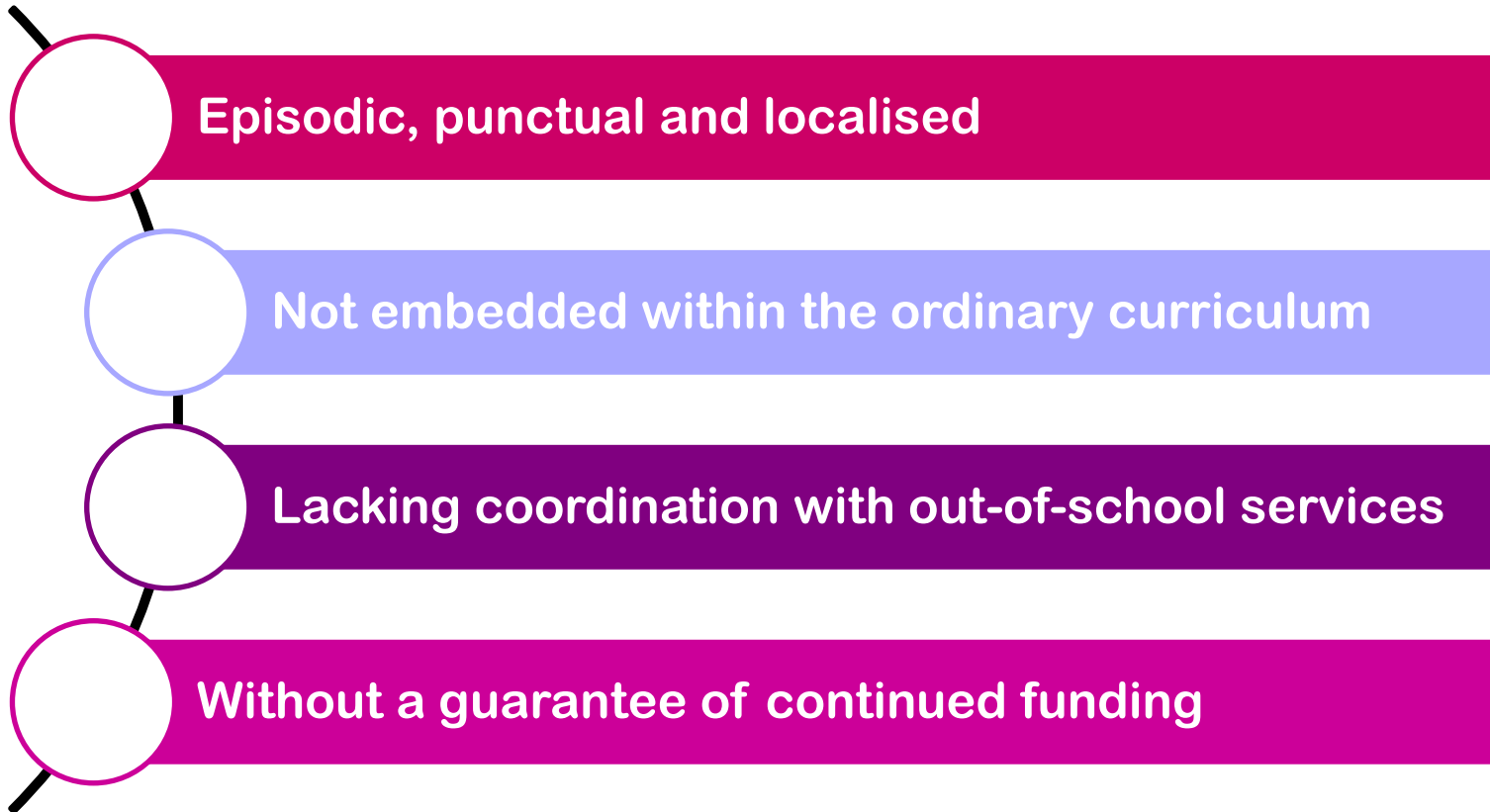
1. Strengthening of ordinary didactic activities in small groups of students with the same level of achievement (60% of projects)
2. Laboratories (arts and crafts activities, entertainment) aiming at improving the school-classroom climate (50% of projects)
3. Guidance, mentoring and coaching single students (33%) with the aid of private services and church associations
4. Activities with ITC and student empowering (33%)
5. Activities to promote parents' involvement (20%)



**Source:** Checchi, 2014 – *Mapping devices in 4 cities : Milano, Roma, Torino and Palermo*

## > Limitations to these strategies

For the most part, these actions are:



## ➤ Teacher involvement



- About 1-5 teachers are regularly involved in such activities in their schools (even more on an occasional basis)
- Fewer teachers explicitly participate in opportunities designed to innovate their teaching methods
- Unfortunately, even if the overall ESL rate was to decrease, the inequity within the social distribution of educational opportunities would remain unaltered

# ➤ Territorial gap: the «southern issue»

- Southern regions and the islands have fallen behind Northern regions when it comes to economic development, unemployment rates, market income differentials, social institutions, etc.
- In terms of education, this translates into:
  - Higher rates of ESL – NEET
  - Larger proportion of low-performing students

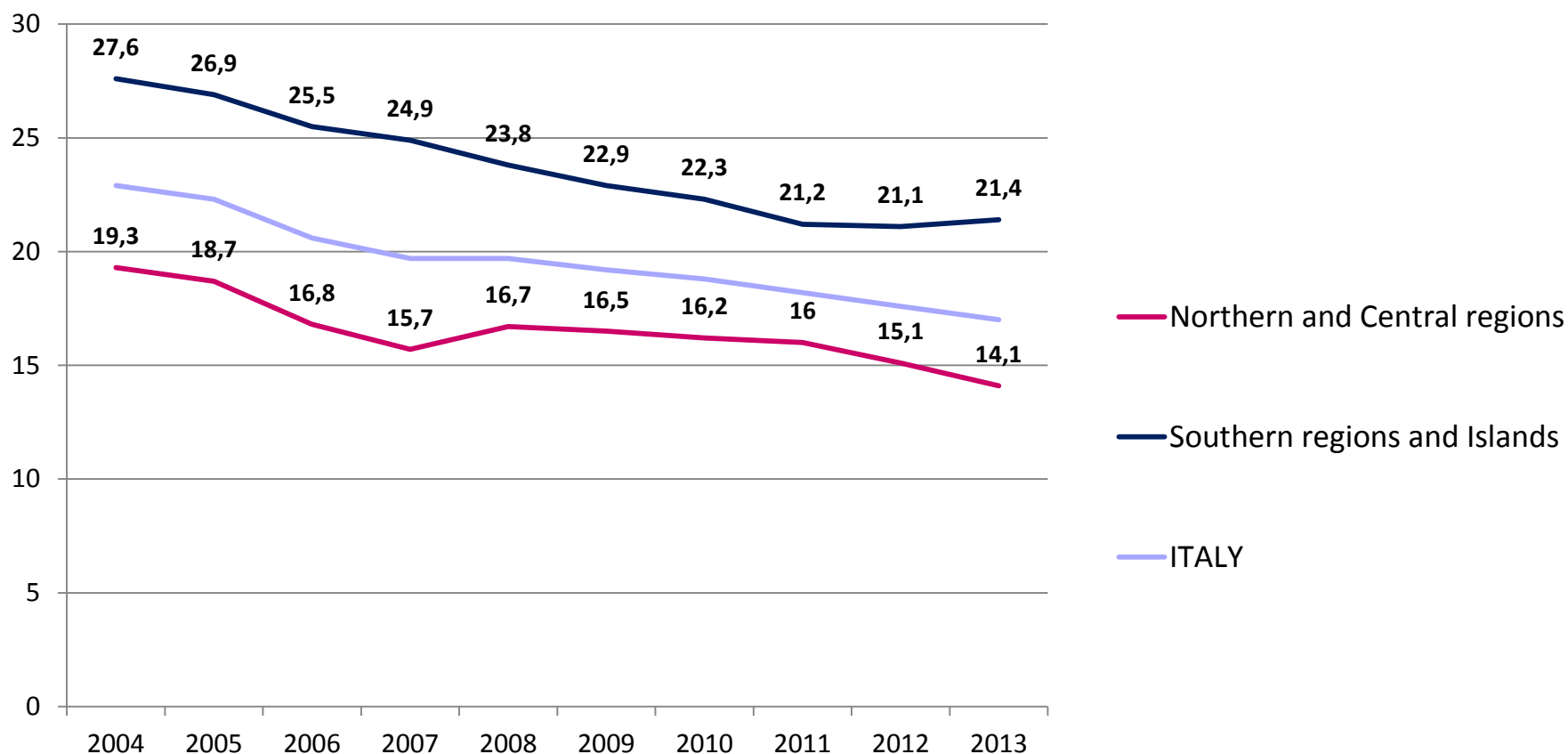


AS A RESULT...

Southern manpower has a bad reputation: workers are perceived as being less skilled



# North vs. South: ESL rates among 18-24 year olds, 2004-2013



Source: Istat

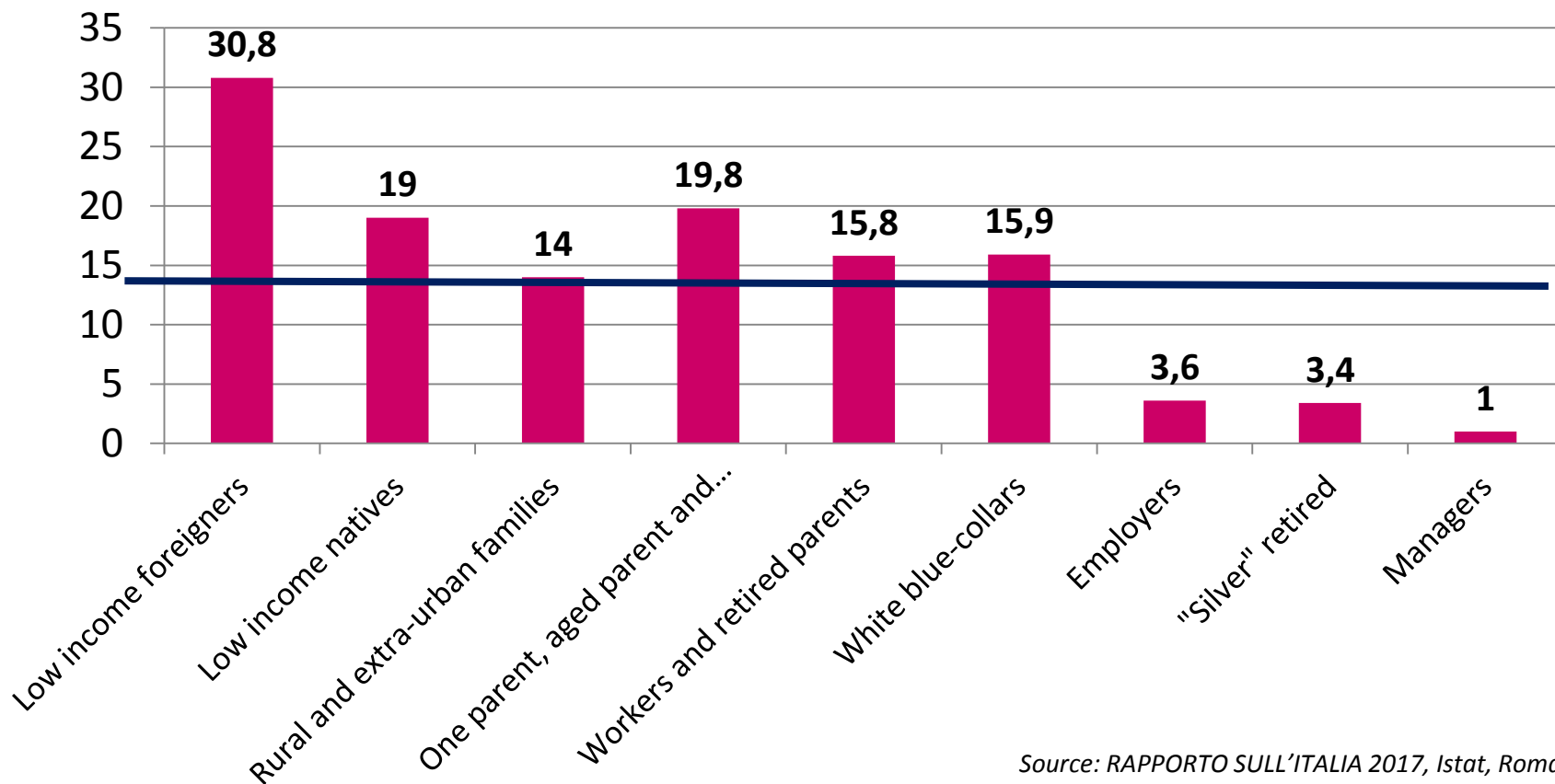


## Percentage of students with limited skills in reading – 4 territorial partitions (PISA 2003, 2006, 2009, 2012, 2015)





## ESL rate among 18-24 year olds, by social group

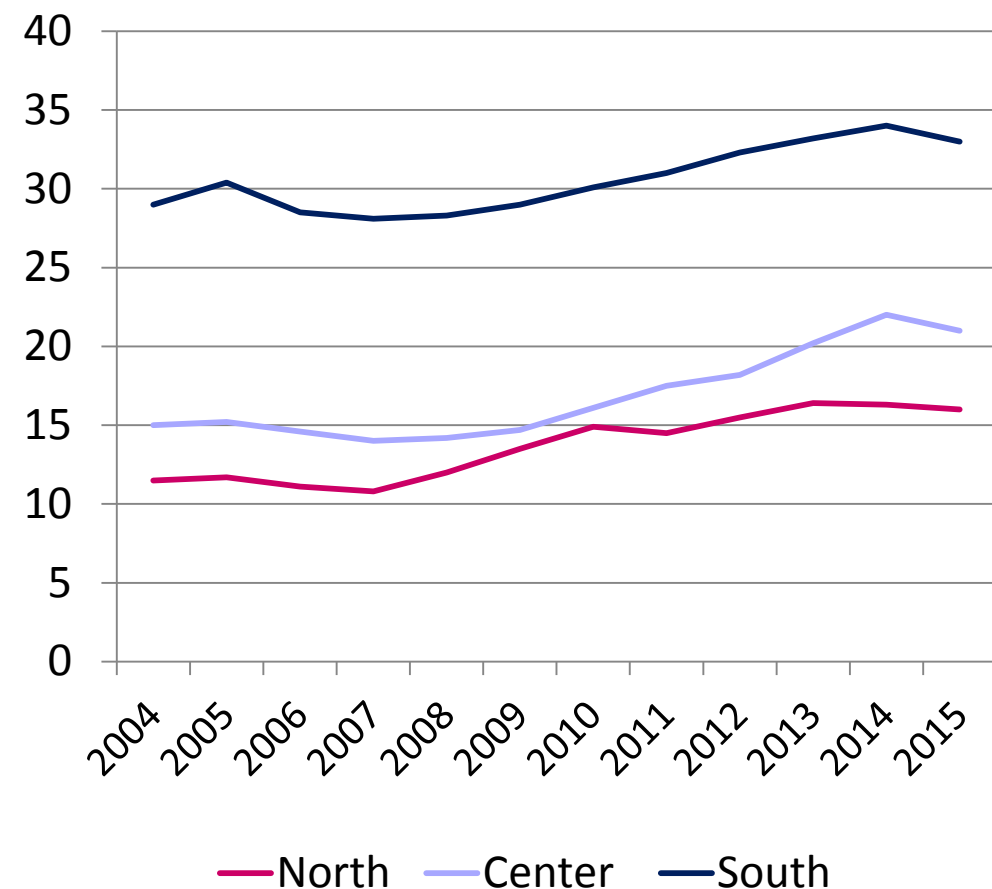


>> Having a disadvantaged background is still the main explanatory variable for ESL in Italy <<

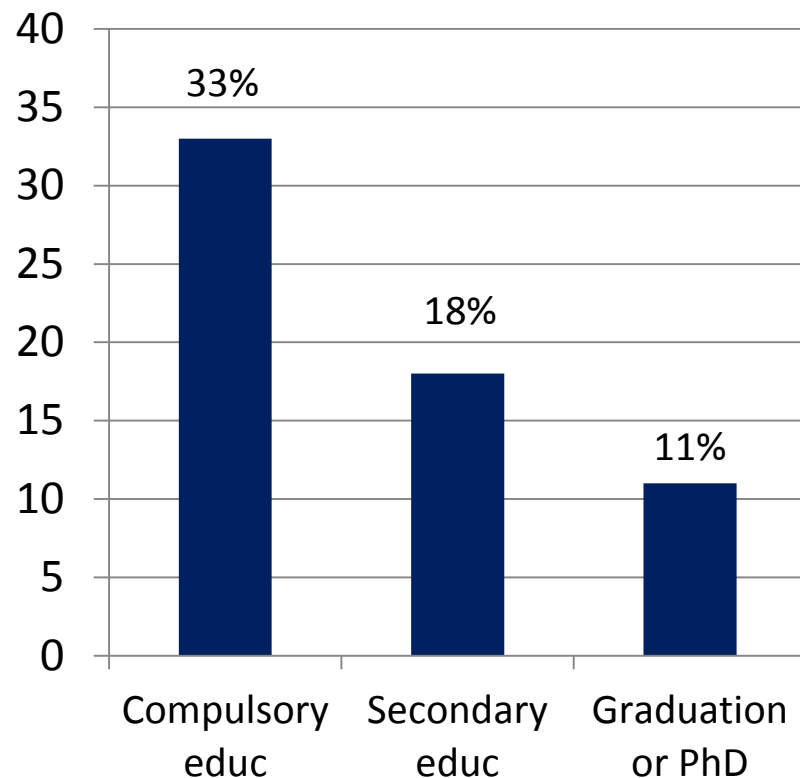




# NEETs (15-29 years old): by territory and by father's education



Source: BES 2016 – Benessere, Equo e sostenibile, Istat, Roma

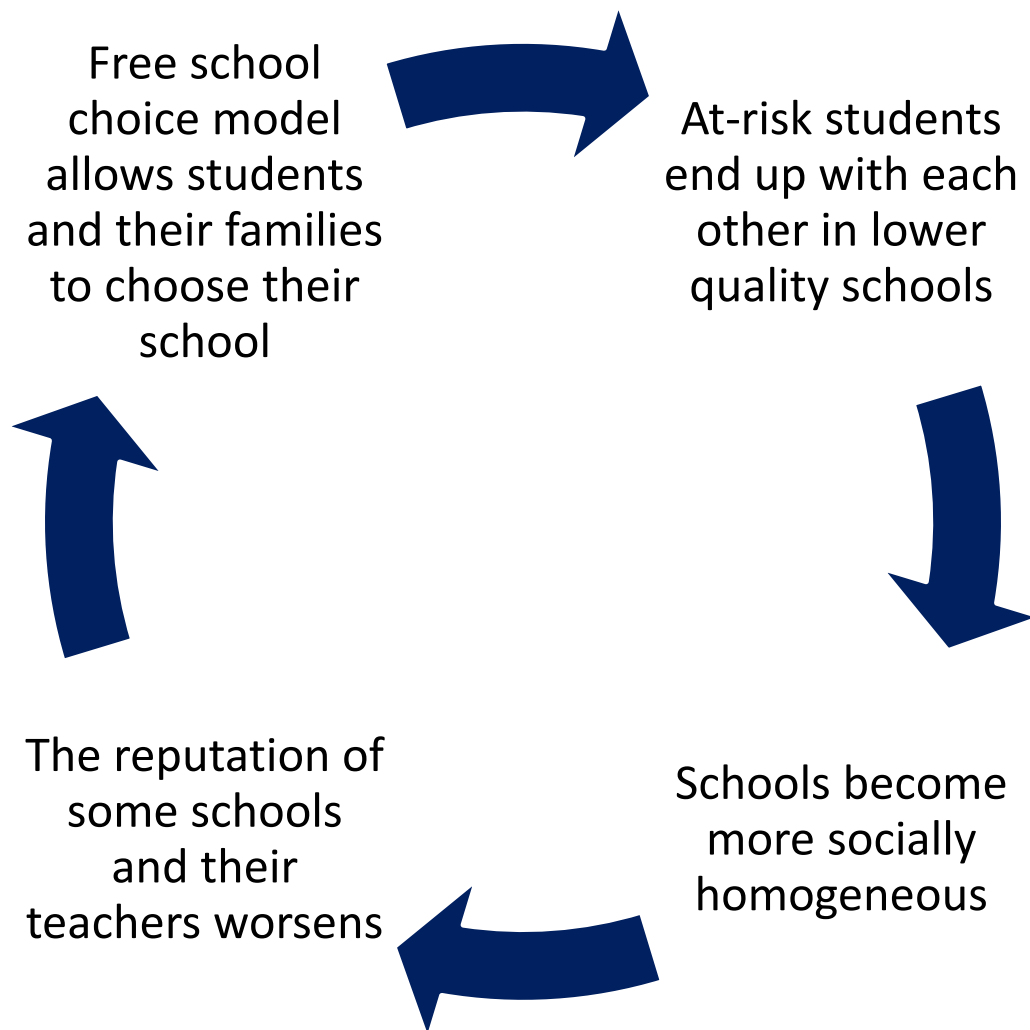


Source: BES, Istat 2014

## ➤ Remote factors for dropping out

- Wide-spread acceptance of a *school-free model* of self actualisation in the workplace (work culture in opposition with academic achievement) ...
- «*Self-fulfilling prophecy*»: if young people think : *I am not going to study anymore because it is not going to pay off* → this increases the amount of youngsters with no job
- *Elitist pedagogical model* : teachers are unable to deal with «bad students», to increase their motivation or recognize their informal learning

# A vicious cycle



# Need for a multi-level approach

## 1. MONITOR

- Prioritize the completion of a national registry of pupils
- Follow their school pathways
- Follow their cognitive and social profiles (including goals)

## 2. TARGET

- Aim at identifying non-conventional «at-risk» students → Not only pushed out of school but also pulled in by other options
- Reach out to teachers, as the main actors in students' relationship with school

## 3. FOSTER « SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY »

- Promote educational partnerships → it is essential to engage all «non-schooling» agencies and local community

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## Effective strategies and good practice for ensuring success in school in Saxony-Anhalt, Germany

**Franziska Lau**

German Foundation for Children and Youth

9 & 10 NOVEMBRE 2017



# General information about the program

## "Schulerfolg sichern"

### Context

- Educational system in Germany decentralized
- German Foundation for Children and Youth acts nationwide
- High school drop-out rates more than 13% in 2008
- Structurally weak region in the eastern part of Germany
- European Commission's political strategy to reduce school drop-out rate has been supported in Saxony-Anhalt with the ESF-funded program "Schulerfolg sichern"



# General information about the program "Schulerfolg sichern"

## Period, target groups and structures

- When?
  - ✓ 2008 - 2015 (first funding period) and
  - ✓ 2015 - 2020 (second funding period)
- For whom?
  - ✓ students of all grade levels
  - ✓ social workers in schools
  - ✓ teachers
  - ✓ responsible actors for schools and youth welfare at regional and at federal state level



# ➤ General information about the program "Schulerfolg sichern"

## Structure

- How does it work?
  - ✓ a systemic, multi-level program designed to bring together education and youth services
  - ✓ a network of about 400 school social workers serving 369 schools of all grade levels
  - ✓ regional network offices in all 14 districts in Saxony-Anhalt
  - ✓ a federal state coordination center



## ➤ Scientific support and program development



- Scientifically developed, accompanied and evaluated by Prof. Dr. Thomas Olk (Martin-Luther University of Halle-Wittenberg) and Prof. Dr. Karsten Speck (Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg)
- Research consistently contributed to further development of the project

# **Scientific support : three main services**

**Investigation of objectives, conditions for success, assessment of the impact of the program modules**

**Evaluation of the efficiency and effectiveness of the results**

**Monitoring of the quality of cooperation between schools, youth welfare services and school development processes, providing feedback**



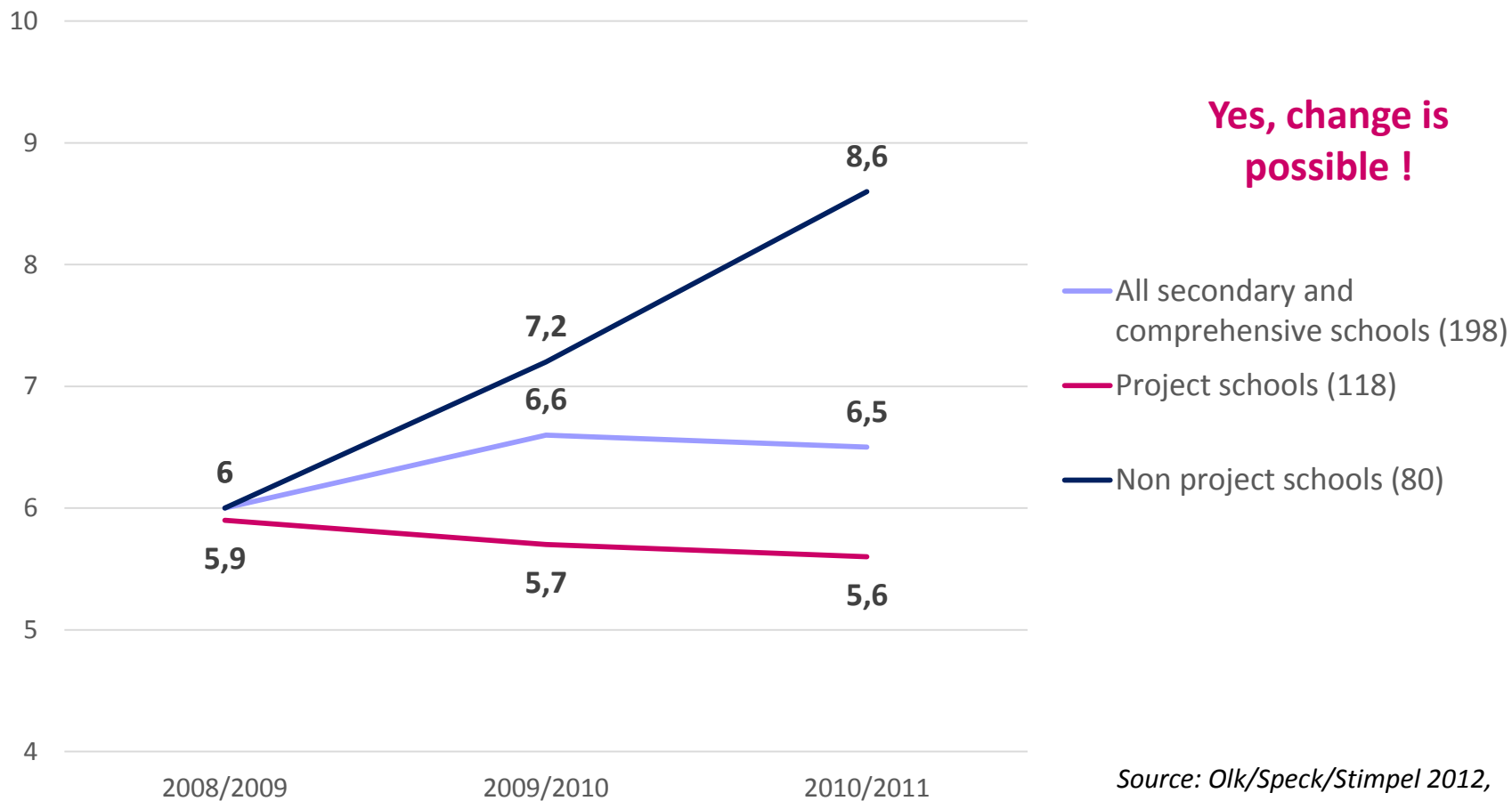
# Evaluation methods

- Collection of qualitative data in four selected regions during two different time periods (2009 and 2011)
- Quantitative analysis of the concept, structure, process and quality of results in 2010 and 2012
- The collection of administrative data
- Participation in meetings, training events, and conferences
- The implementation and monitoring of supra-regional expert groups (consisting of practitioners, politicians, administrators and academics) for professionalization, self-assessment and quality and program development



# Proven effects of the program

Early school leaving rates in secondary and comprehensive schools in Saxony-Anhalt, the difference between schools in and out of the project



**Yes, change is possible !**

Source: Olk/Speck/Stimpel 2012, evaluation report

# ➤ Proven effects on pupils

- Absences have been decreased;
- Behavioural problems have been reduced as the result of individual counselling;
- School performance among pupils at risk has been improved;
- Pupils at risk have become more self-confident (confidence in contact, dealing with criticism, self-esteem).



Graphic: © S. Bach/ DKJS

# > Proven effects on schools

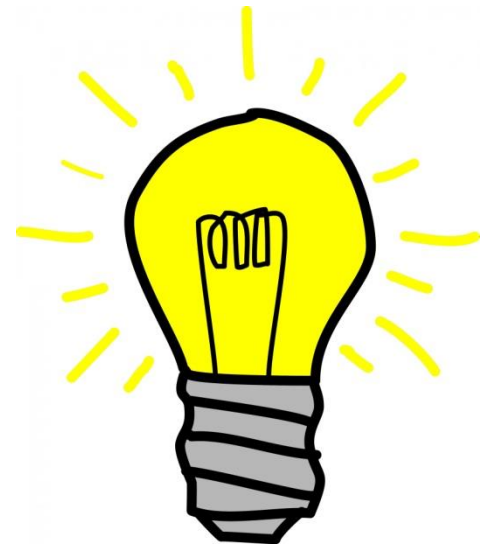


Graphic: © S. Bach/ DKJS

- Violence and bullying have been reduced;
- School and classroom climates have improved;
- Parents are more involved;
- Partnerships between schools and non-school organisations have become more common and more intensive;
- Teachers have a clearer understanding of what students need and feel, are more supported in their efforts;
- Children are better protected (react more early, intensified cooperation with parents and youth welfare, more successful arrangement of support and counselling);
- School social work is successfully integrated into school structures (conceptual and organizational integration, recognition and acceptance of offers by main target groups).

# ➤ Lessons Learned (1/2)

- **Generally:**
  - ✓ Necessity of a systemic strategy, including built-in evaluation mechanisms at school, regional and federal state levels
- **In particular:**
  - ✓ political will;
  - ✓ sufficient time and resources;
  - ✓ ongoing reflection, consultation and adjustment to the process;
  - ✓ support structures / concepts / processes and standards for quality control;
  - ✓ clear and measurable objectives, planning of implementation and reviews;





## Lessons Learned (2/2)

### ■ Furthermore:

- ✓ development of competencies in process management of complex systems;
- ✓ will and competencies for cross-departmental action;
- ✓ integration of networks at the municipal level;
- ✓ widespread knowledge and education on the phenomenon of school dropout;
- ✓ taking advantage of the opportunity to strengthen school development through networking and teamwork between teachers and social workers;
- ✓ starting early, preferably before entering primary school, in order to prevent drop-out;
- ✓ intensive involvement of parents, children and communities

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**Thank you very much for  
your attention!**

**Contact: [franziska.lau@dkjs.de](mailto:franziska.lau@dkjs.de)**

**Get more information:**

**[www.schulerfolg-sichern.de](http://www.schulerfolg-sichern.de)**

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Effective strategies and good practice  
for ensuring success in school in  
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Franziska Lau

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# Early School Leaving: the Irish Experience

Dr Delma Byrne

Maynooth University Departments of  
Sociology and Education

9 & 10 NOVEMBRE 2017

# Overview

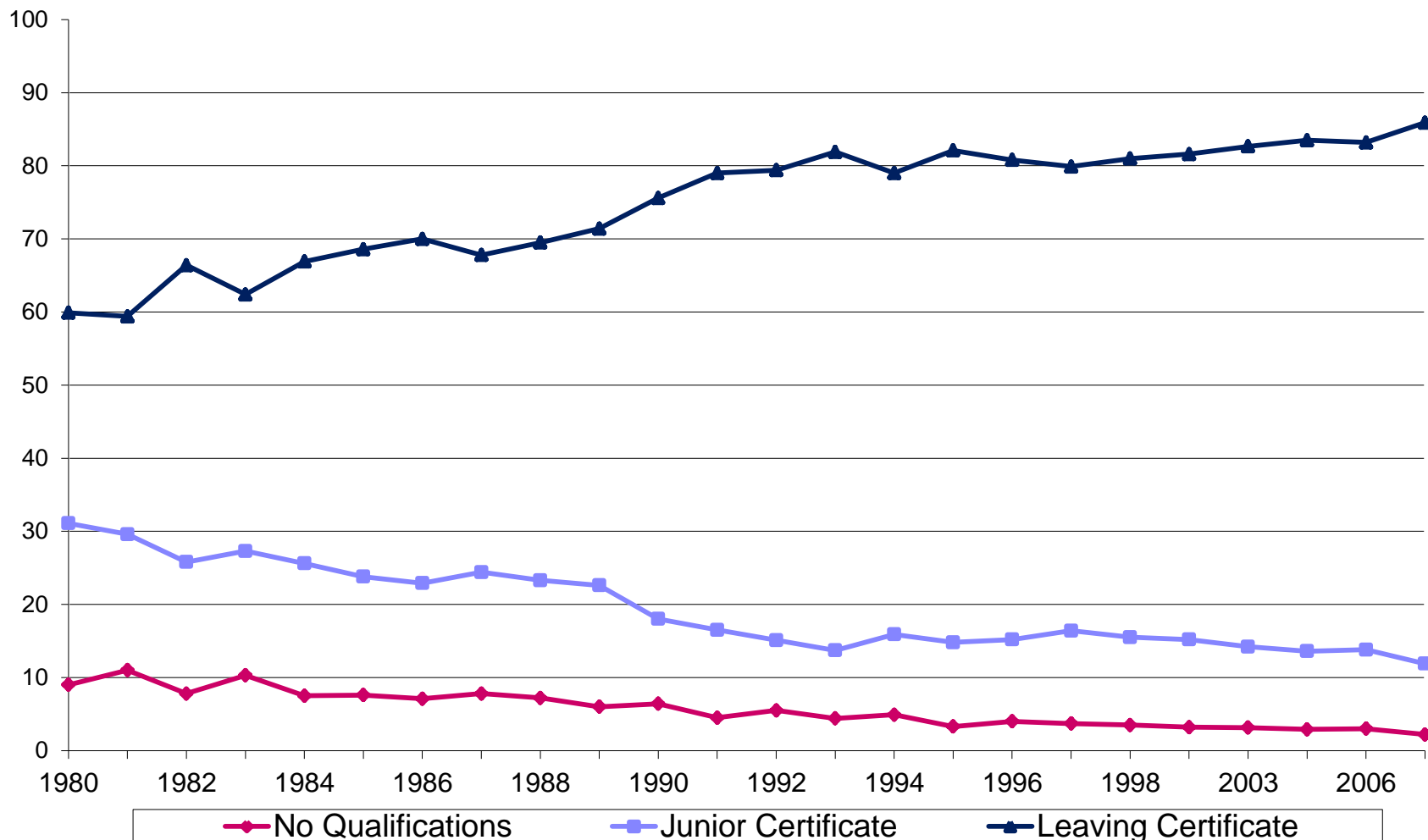
- Introduction
- Macro Patterns of Early School Leaving in Ireland
- DEIS as a Key Policy Instrument
- Getting Beyond the Macro
  - Stages at which young people leave school in Ireland
  - Variation between schools in rates of early school leaving
  - Student experiences that are associated with early school leaving
  - School organisation aspects that are associated with early school leaving
- Future Policy Direction.

## Introduction

- Ireland has experienced a **decline in rates of early school leaving since the 1990s**. In 2015, 89.4% of 20-24 year olds gained a terminal Leaving Certificate qualification compared with 82.6% in 2000 (DES 2015)
- Ireland has **lower rates of early school leaving than the average for EU28 countries**, with similar rates to those in Australia and Finland.
- In the Irish context, there are plans to **reduce the rate of early school leaving to 8 % by 2020** (Morris and Parashar 2012).



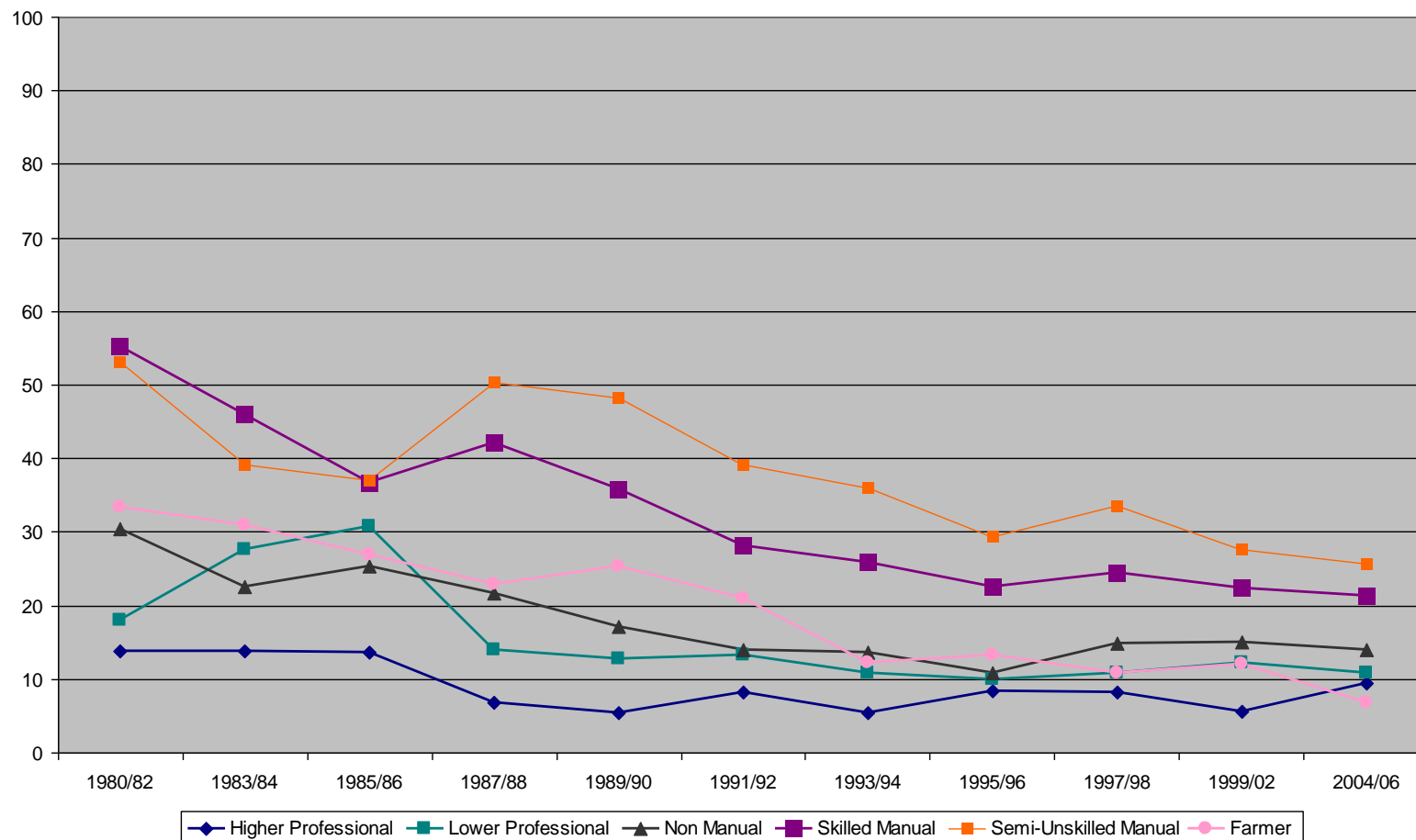
# Figure 1: Long Term Patterns of Educational Attainment Among School Leavers, 1980-2006



Source: Byrne and Smyth 2010 using School Leavers Survey, all available years



## Persistence in early school leaving by social class background

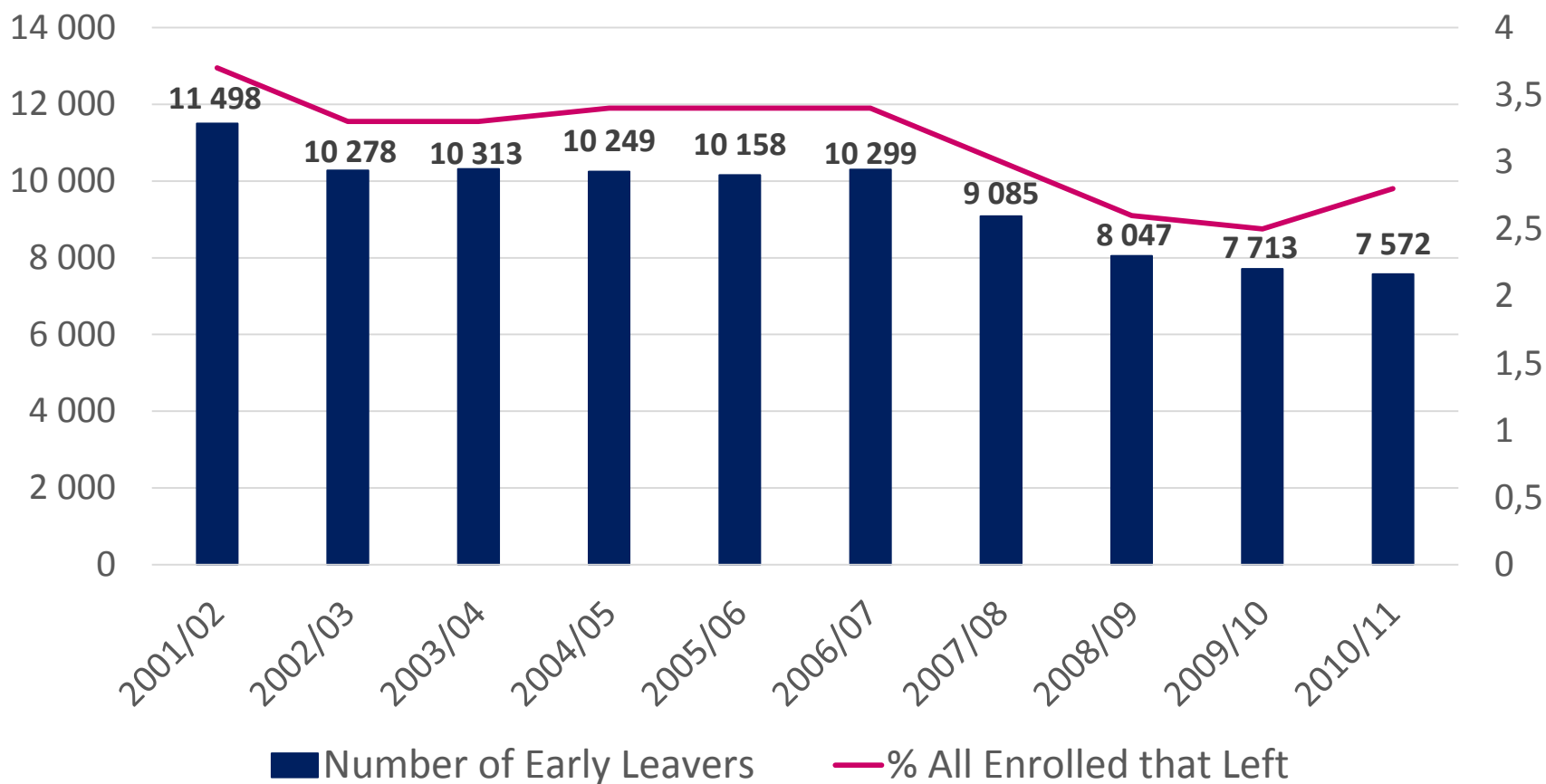


Over a 30 year period between the late 1970s and mid 2000s, **unskilled manual groups and those in work-poor households** were persistently more likely not to make the transition from junior cycle to senior cycle (Byrne and Smyth 2010; Byrne and McCoy 2017).





## Figure 2: Administrative Estimates of Early School Leaving, 2001-2011



Source: Department of Education and Skills 2013, 2016

# ➤ Who is not captured in this data!

- Neither data source includes young people who are attending:
  - Special Schools
  - High Support Special Schools
  - Youth Encounter Projects (YEPs)
  - Children Detention Schools
  - Children who are not in any of these services
- Administrative data from DES do not include young people who left school during the final year of senior cycle, those in alternative pathways, and those attending 'grind' schools.

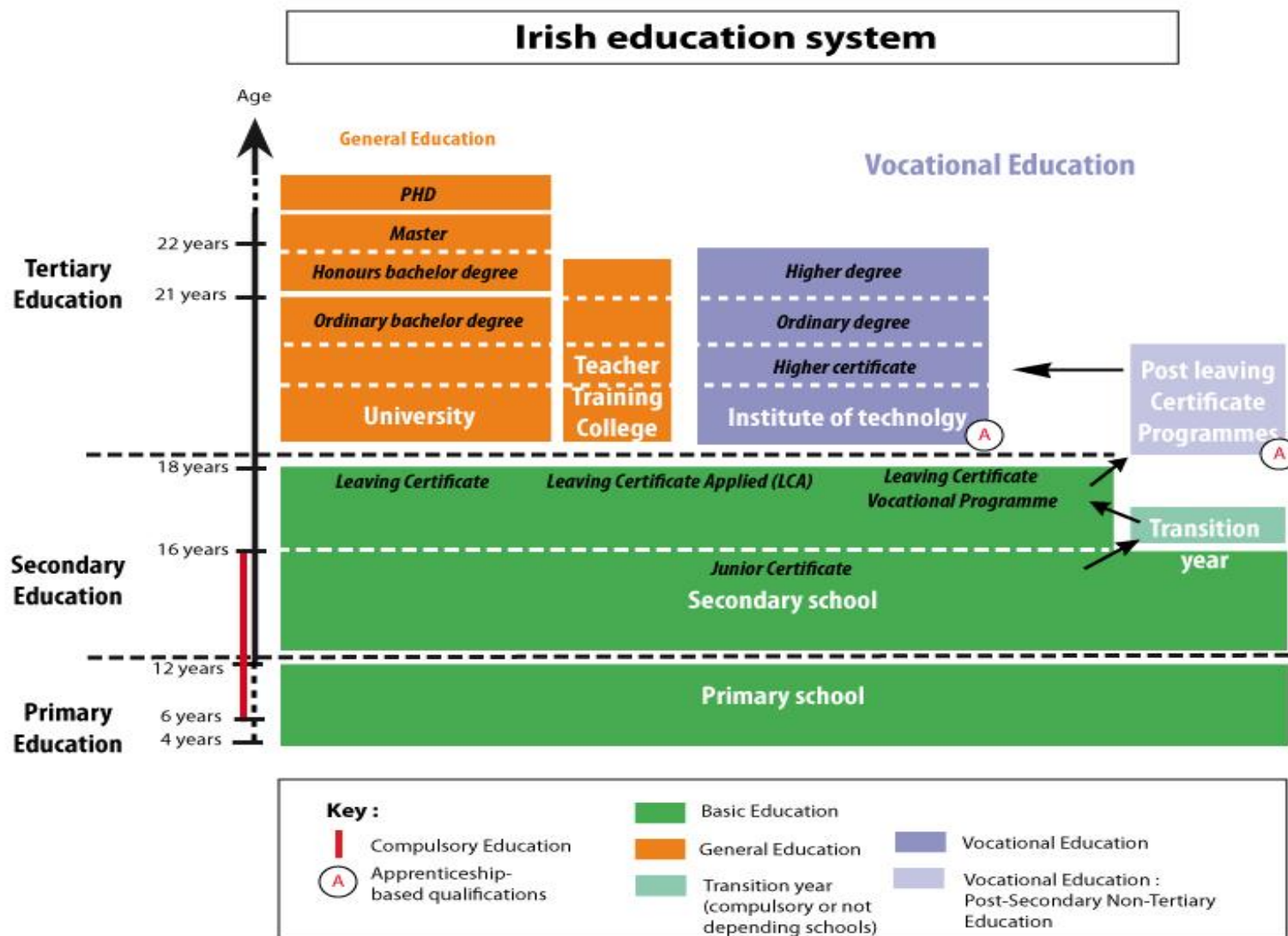
# **DEIS: Key Policy Instrument: Key Actions**

- **DEIS – Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (2005)** is the Department of Education and Skills (DES) main policy initiative to tackle educational disadvantage (DES 2005).
- **Introduction of an Integrated School Support Programme**
  - Focus on **measures to enhance attendance, educational progression, retention and attainment**
  - School Leaving Age of 16 or the completion of 3 years
  - **NEWB Framework for Regular School Attendance and Absenteeism/non-Attendance**
  - **Supporting the transfer from Primary to Second Level**
  - **School Completion Programme**
    - In school and after-school supports, holiday-time activities (for those in school) and out-of-school provision (for those who have left school)
    - Home School Community Liaison Scheme
    - Junior Certificate School Completion Programme (JCSP)
    - Collaboration with National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) & Support Teacher Project

## **DEIS: Key Policy Instrument: Additional Actions**

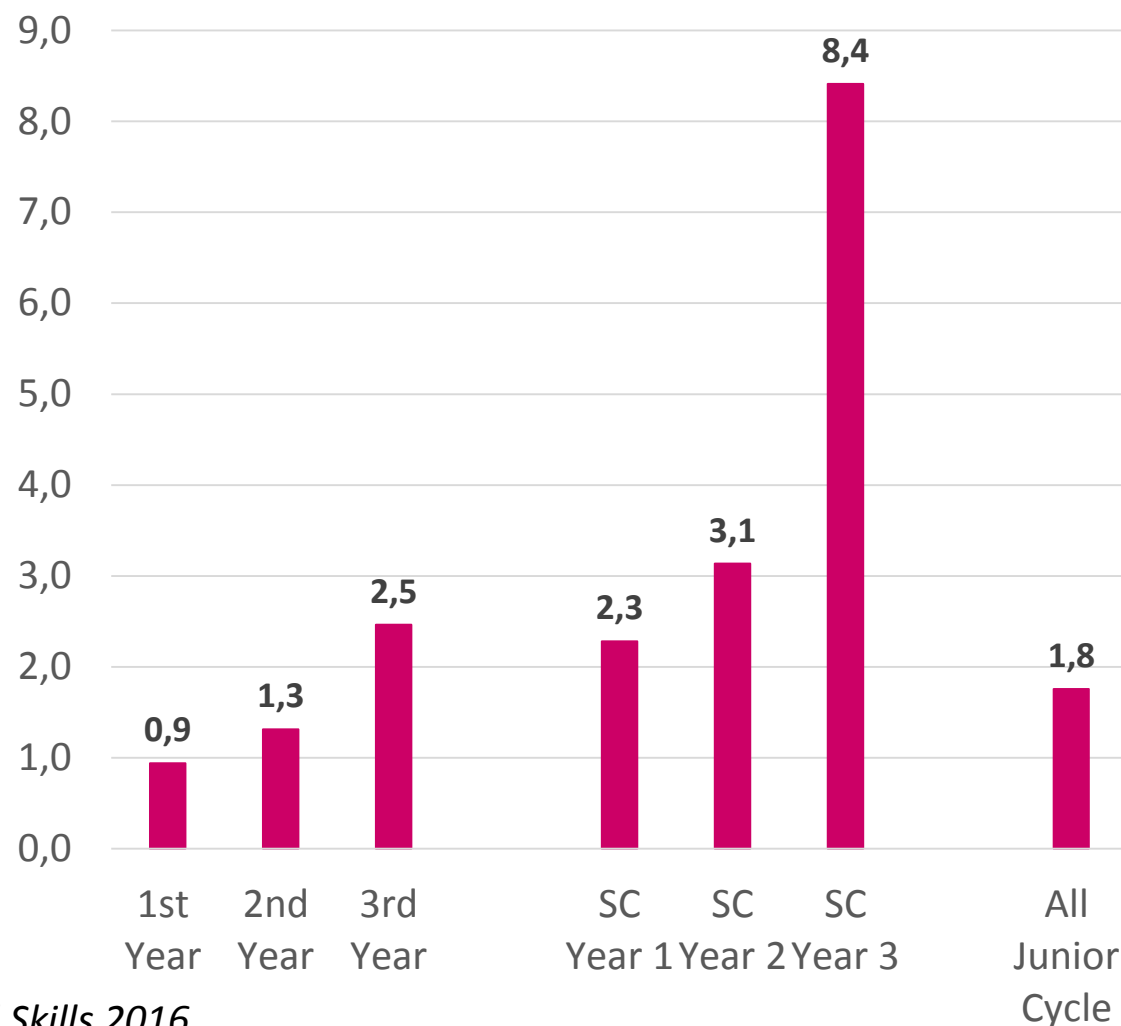
- Additional **financial support** to resource schools and school clusters
- **Planning, Target Setting and Ongoing Review Process**
- Professional Development
- Integration of Services and Partnership Working
- Liaison with School Principal's Networks
- Research and Evaluation
- Implementation of the Action Plan

# ➤ The Irish Education System



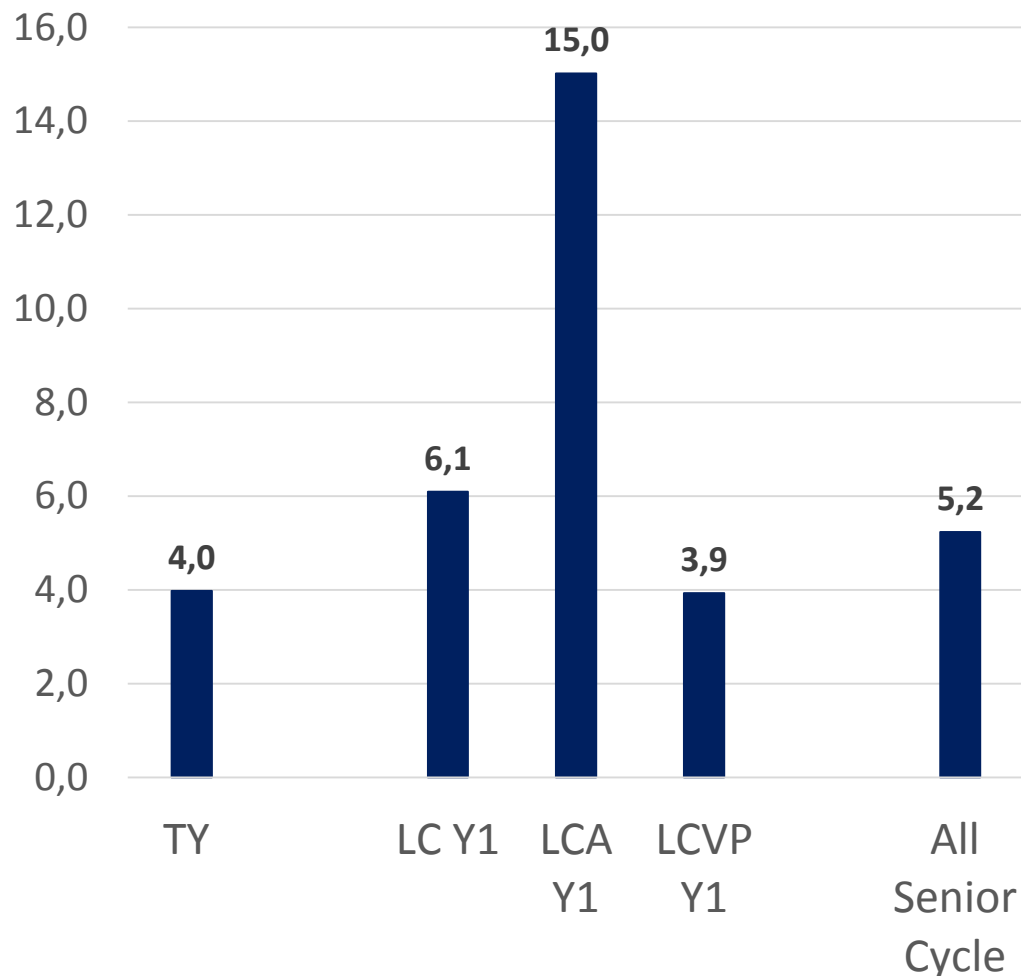
## ➤ Figure 3: Retention to the Junior Certificate

As illustrated by Figure 3, among Junior Cycle pupils, rates of early school leaving are greater in the **School Completion Programme**, a programme which specifically targets those at risk of early school leaving.



Source: Department of Education and Skills 2016

## ➤ Figure 4: Retention to Leaving Certificate

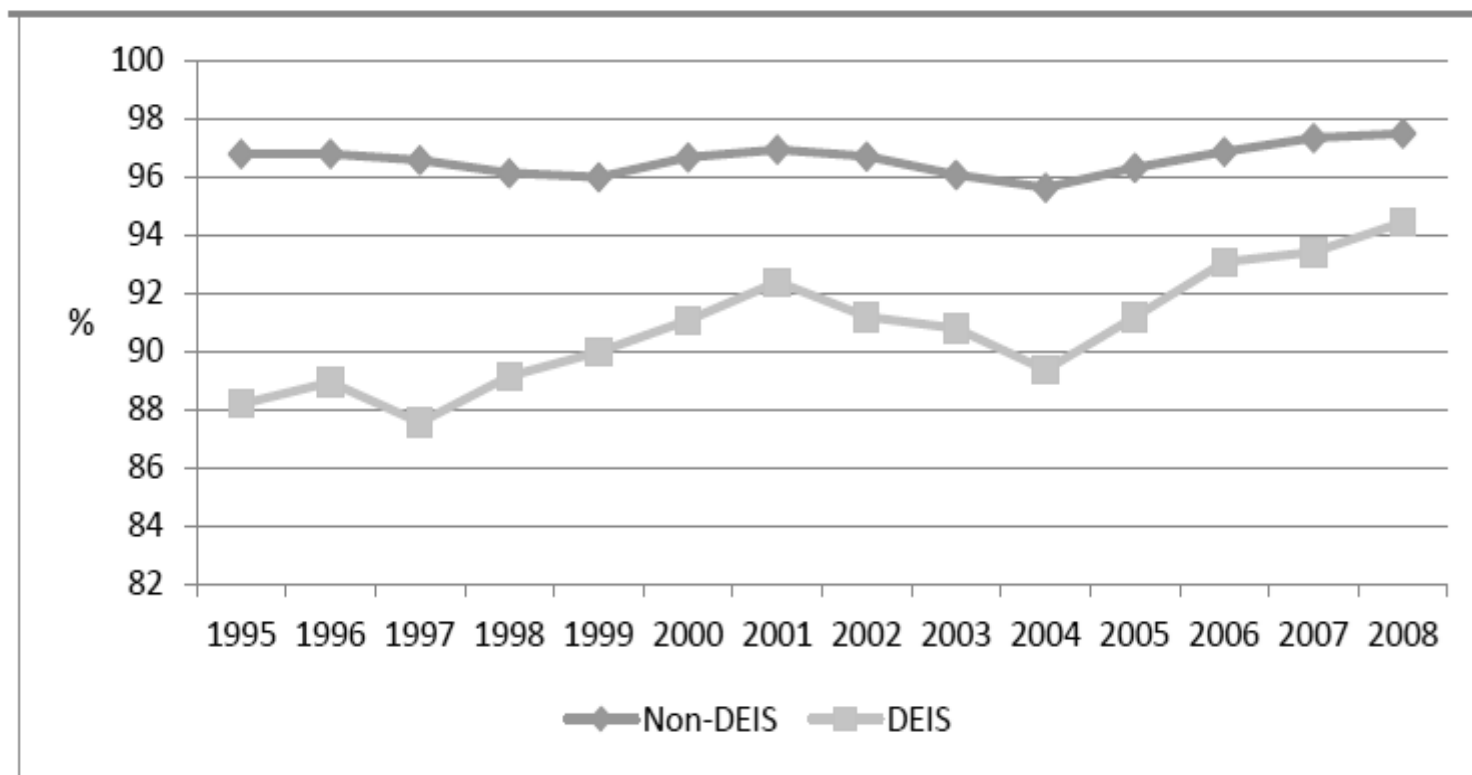


- Rates of drop-out are higher in senior cycle than junior cycle (1.8% compared to 5.2%).
- Curriculum Differentiation at Senior Cycle.
- Early School Leaving Rates higher in the pre-vocational track, **the Leaving Certificate Applied**, at senior cycle.

Source: Department of Education and Skills 2016



## Figure 5: Average Percentage Retention to Junior Certificate for the 1995-2007 Cohorts in DEIS and Non-DEIS Schools

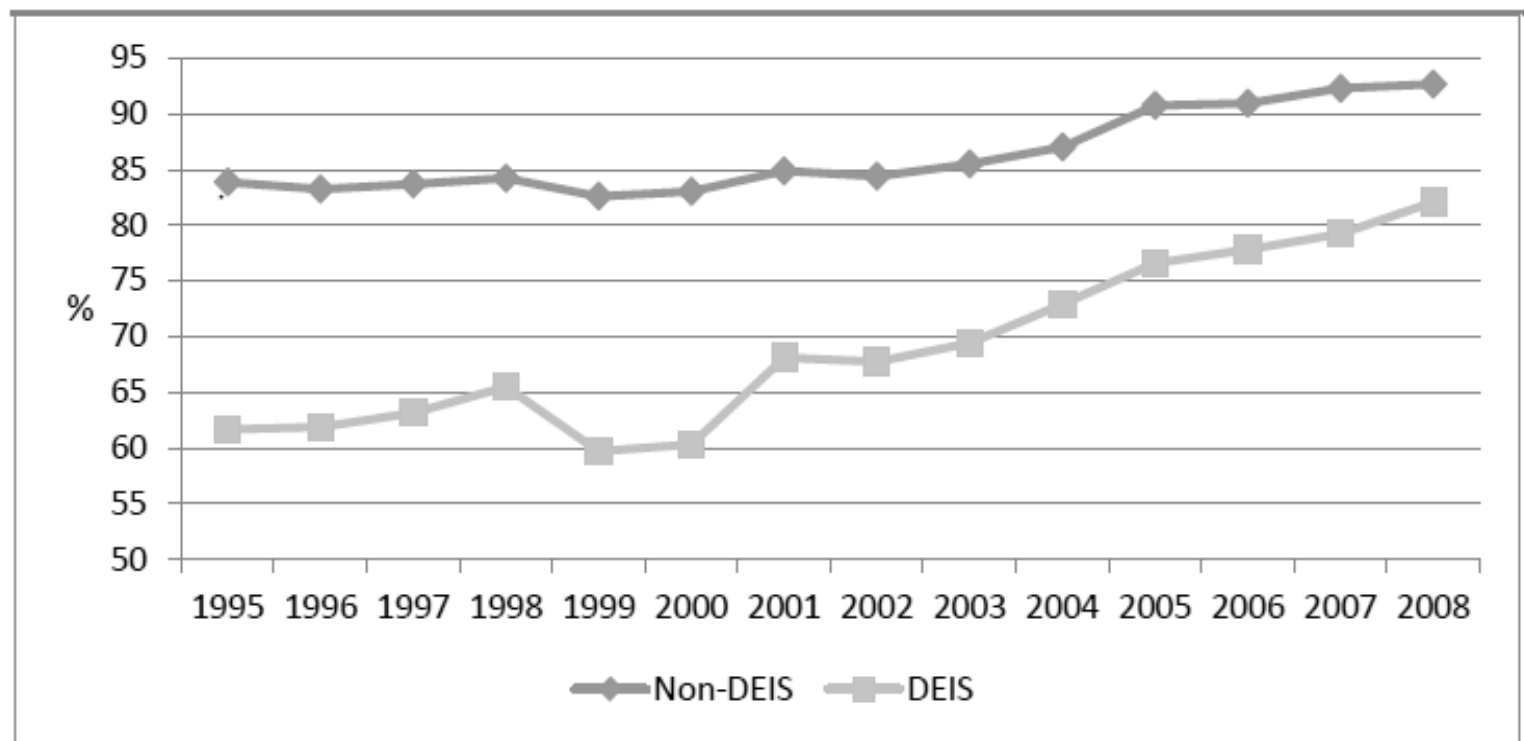


Source: Weir et al. (2014); DES (2015).





## Figure 6: Average Percentage Retention to Leaving Certificate for the 1995-2007 Cohorts in DEIS and Non-DEIS schools



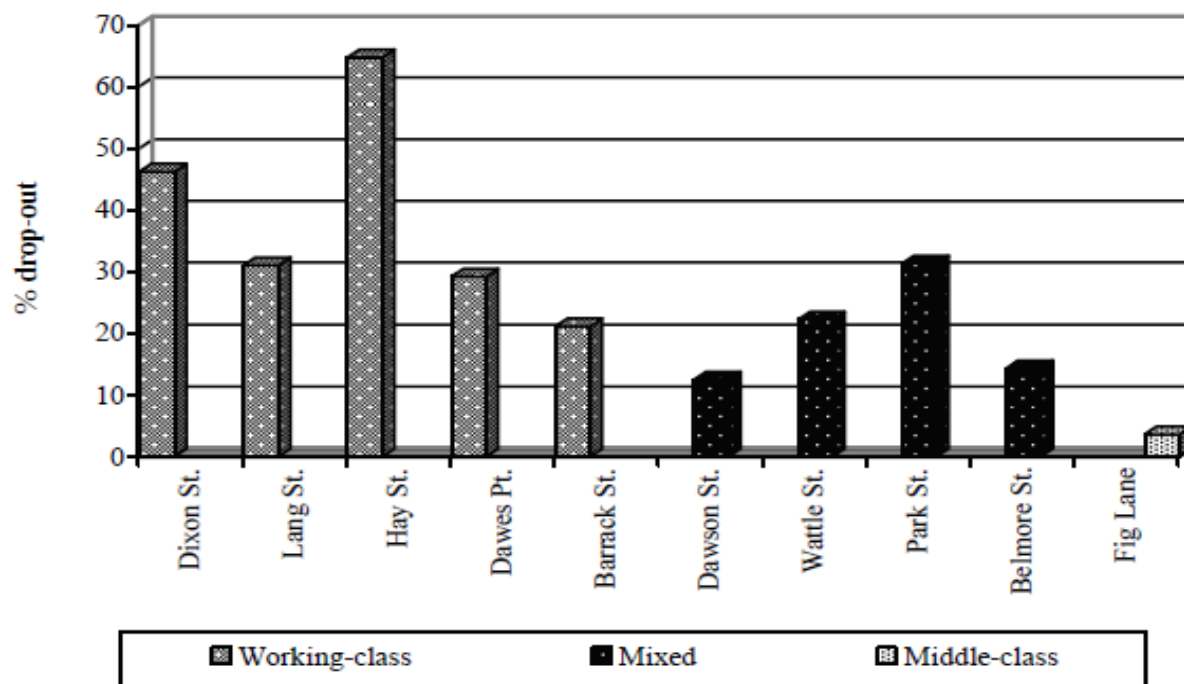
Source: Weir et al. (2014); DES (2015).

## Caution

- ‘Increases in retention rates cannot be ascribed as a direct outcome of the introduction of the DEIS programme as retention rates have also increased in non-DEIS schools in this time frame. Moreover, it is likely that other factors may have influenced retention rates, particularly the collapse in the construction industry and employment in general due to the economic recession from 2008 onwards’ (Smyth et al, 2015: 45).



## Figure 7: Variation across schools in early school leaving



Source: Post-Primary Longitudinal Study data.

- Longitudinal case study of 12 schools.
- Considerable variation in early school leaving rates between schools, including schools with high concentrations of disadvantage (Byrne and Smyth 2010).



## Student experiences that are associated with early school leaving (1/2)

Longitudinal study of young people revealed:

- Rates are higher among those who **did not have any of their friends** from primary level in the transition to second level [focus on school policy regarding settling in to school]
- Curricular continuity and tracking: drop out rates higher for those who experience **lack of challenge** in the transition from primary to secondary, particularly among those in **lower stream classes**.
- Drop out is preceded by **negative teacher-student interaction** and **misbehaviour, truancy** and **absenteeism**.
- **Being bullied** is also associated with drop-out: **negative student-student interaction**
- **More negative perceptions of teachers and schools**



## Student experiences that are associated with early school leaving (2/2)

Longitudinal study of young people also revealed:

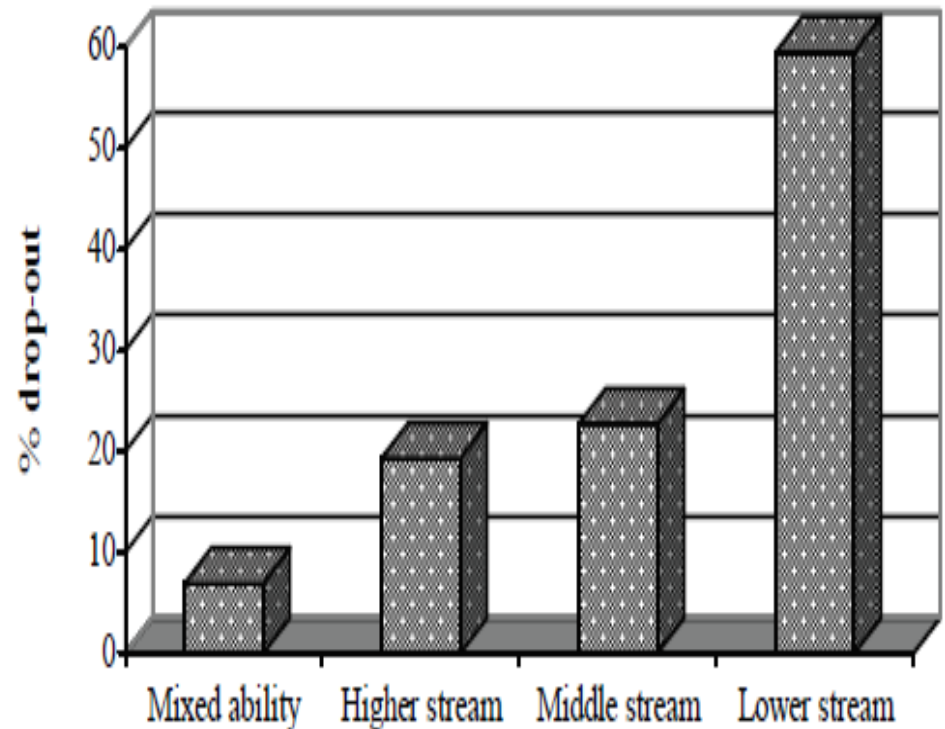
- **Negative academic self-image** in first year is associated with early school leaving **unable to cope with schoolwork**, as is **lower educational aspirations**
- No significant findings regarding parental involvement, but those who **never or hardly ever discussed how they were getting on in school** and those who **rarely sat down together as a family to have dinner** were more likely to drop out of school
- **Working part-time during junior cycle** was associated with early school leaving.



# School Organisation aspect that is associated with early school leaving

## Ability Grouping

- Considerable variation in early school leaving rates according to ability grouping (Byrne and Smyth 2010).



Source: Post-Primary Longitudinal Study data.

# **Future Policy Directions**

## Revised DEIS Action Plan 2017

- **Improve retention rates** from 82.7 per cent to 90.2 per cent by 2025
- **Literacy and numeracy** targets
- Focus on **student wellbeing**
- **Progression to FE and HE** (non-manual and semi-unskilled manual backgrounds)
- Increase **access to teacher education, improve parental engagement and community linkages**

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**AGIR AVANT LA RUPTURE :  
COMMENT INTERVENIR FACE AU  
RISQUE DE DÉCROCHAGE SCOLAIRE ?**

**Posez vos questions**

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