



Local action plan for dropout prevention and social solidarity



MUNICIPALITY OF SOFIA
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I. OUR FOCUS

The recent Local action plan for dropout prevention and social solidarity is based on the Educational strategy of Sofia Municipality and the ULSG Programme and action plan within PREVENT project, developed within 2013-2014 by our local ULSG. The plan is based on the experience developed within 3 pilot school programs and many discussions with parents, teachers and students in the three pilot schools in Sofia. As a result of the PREVENT project on local level was initiated a Guidebook for parents. It aims at decreasing the levels of school drop-out through increased awareness for the school organization and affairs concerning children and their mothers and fathers. It is issued in the frame of the PREVENT project (PREVENT - The Involvement of Parents in the Prevention of Early School Leaving).

Early childhood inclusive education project with special focus on Roma

What to do?

Provide Roma children with equal opportunities to high quality education from preschool, preparatory classes and primary mixed school.



How to do?

Promote successful models of Roma children' inclusion in mixed preschools and schools which could be replicated from the local level to the national level policy.

Support capacity building at preschool level through preschool and school improvement programs and teacher professional development

We have a «Prevent» dream! Well-educated pupils are socially, personally and emotionally intelligent, know what knowledge they need and how to acquire and use it in various contexts.

Our goal is to create a sustainable network of professional public and private institutions and organizations amongst EU countries in order to exchange their expertise and best practices for dropout prevention and reintegration of dropouts from school. Main project objective is to synchronize and improve the existing work methods, models and instruments in field of dropout prevention. Demonstrating to the public (other institutions, parents, media, local societies) the need of educational programmes for social skills, health and civic education and to develop an effective model for prevention.



II. INTRODUCTION - "DROPOUTS" DEFINITION, TERMINOLOGY, LEVELS OF UNDERSTANDING

The term "Dropouts of school"

- grammatical form - describing the "iterative process or trend"
- it is defined as "abnormal connection with the school community" (Han, 1987);
- presented with the following actions: "recorded in the previous year", "it recorded school year"; "not completed level of education", "do not move", "do not left due to illness or absence";
- it is "quiet", "invisible", drop - chronic failure, failure is avoided by absenteeism, academic potential, but lack of motivation (Kronik, 1998);
- "dropout" is not the same as "not covered students";
- "be trained" to under 16 years old students;

Main understandings about the term "dropout"

- It is occurrence of complex nature;
- It is connected to social groups 'poverty' (Battalion, 1995);
- In social terms can be represented as a destructive and deviant behavior need filling content message of "equality of opportunity" (Coleman, 1990);
- There is a direct connection / relevance to economic and cultural state of society, due to the environment, family, ethnic and cultural differences;
- Directly influenced by government policy, local responsibilities and school organization

Basic factors exercising intense influence on dropping out of school are:

1. **Social – economic reasons** differentiate like one of the basic factors for dropping out of the educational system. Bad quality of life of certain social groups is a serious obstacle in front of education of children and young man representing these groups. According to 50% of teachers and 69% of social workers the "poorness of the family" is a considerable reason for dropping out of school. On the other hand, a child not going to school is valuable as working resource, often supporting the formation of family budget or helping in household work.
2. **Educational reasons for dropout of school** are related with school environment and with organization of educational process. The most considerable reasons are *the difficulties in assimilation of syllabus; frail interest in educative process resulting willingness/unwillingness of going to school; presence of conflicts with classmates and/or teachers and others*. There are some other objective aspects of the school environment, having influence on the risk of child's dropping out of school and on the amount of years that the child will spend in school – presence and efficacy of preschool training, the quality and complexity of educative content, qualification of teachers, problems with the education in mixed and incomplete classes, etc. The state policy about the obligatory preschool education is an important step in prevention of dropping out of school.



3. **Child's ethno – cultural environment exercise substantial influence.** One of the most risky groups (children who aren't going or are dropping out of school) is the children from Roma ethnical groups. In this group are registered some specific ethno – cultural reasons for early dropout from school, such as *early marriages* (12% of dropout children between 12 and 16 years point as a reason for dropping out “got married”), fear in parents for letting their older children going to school because of the danger of stealing, low level of valuating the education, etc. The accumulation of economic, educational and ethno – cultural risk factors exercise biggest influence when a family lives in compact group with representatives of their own ethnoses.

The process of dropout of school is delineated as complicated and complex problem, which can be examined in specific interpretative schemes through the prism of regional specifics, profile of the different participants and interested sides, resources and capacity of educational institutions. Knowing of these specific points (often bring the problem beyond the own responsibility concerning its causing and existing) is an important precondition for effective prevention and decreasing of dropout of school.

III. NORMATIVE DOCUMENTS OF NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVEL RELATED TO DROPOUT PREVENTION POLICY

The problem with the dropout of school is an object of purposeful precautions and policies for prevention or for getting over with the consequences since 5-6 years. We observe pronounced **tendency of looking for complex decisions of the problem of coordination of efforts in the educational system with the system for children's protection and social protection.** The character of bigger part of fulfilled precautions is cross-sectional.

Examples for these are **political instruments** like:

- Integrated plan for application of United Nations Convention for children's rights
- National program for fulfilled embracement of students in obligatory school age
- Bulgarian Memorandum for social inclusion
- Strategy for educational integration of children and students from ethnical minorities

Substantial part of precautions is pointed to children in **primary school (6-11 years)** where the indexes of dropout are the lowest (*the obligatory preschool preparation, free breakfasts, free manuals, free transportation to school, onetime aid for first grade pupil, acting new teaching programs corresponding to the age specifics of children, etc.*);

- **Unequaled developed spectrum of precautions and policies:** The acting precautions are prevalent pointed to the neutralization of the **economic reasons** of dropping out of school. A small part of them (*obligatory preschool preparation and improved teaching programs*) is pointed to neutralization of educational reasons for dropping out of school. There are only a few separate projects with limited duration and range of acting pointed to ethno – cultural reasons for dropout, where they have influence to groups of children after 11 years old.



- **Insufficiently good public communication about the problem with dropout and undertook precautions in this.** Parents best know the precautions for prevention of dropout, in shape of material aid (receiving free manuals, breakfasts, month aids for child and onetime aid for first grade pupil), compared to immaterial educational precautions (going to training group/class, full day form of education, boarding – school education);
- **Supervision and collecting information** about the status of the problem with dropout of school isn't coordinated enough. Big amount of data and information are collected by Ministry of education, youth and science, National statistics institute and Government Agency for child protection. The problem is that it's not used effectively because of the differences in criteria systems (*definitions of dropout, definitions of reasons, etc.*) That's due to the lack of capacity for analyses of the information and also to the lack of system for exchange of information between the three institutions. We still don't have a system for valuation of effectiveness of various precautions, even that some of them have been applied since half of their applied period.

LEVELS OF UNDERSTANDING

According to parents: the most important potential effect for prevention of dropping out of school will have the following precautions:

- Material support of families in need with: free food, clothes and manuals (45%);
- Insurance of special teacher supporting the poor children (18%);
- Opportunity for the child to learn a profession (15,3%);
- Restrictions like stopping the social aids if the child doesn't go regularly to school (14,3%).

Teachers and social workers accent on better relation between social aids and the purposes of education through:

- free manuals for all students from first to eight class (90%);
- free food for social poor children with at least 1 warm meal per day (52%);
- specialized pedagogical support for poor and threatened of dropout of school children, applying of all day and boarding – school forms of education (around 40%);
- insurance of resources for integration of poor and threatened of dropout of school children to outclass forms of school life (around 35%).

Some STATISTICS...

1. State the participation rates in pre-primary education

60 000 is the approx. number of students in kindergarten / nursery schools in Sofia

2. State the rates of students completing their compulsory education

1 245 000 is the total number of students in Bulgaria

244 000 is the total number of students in Sofia

3400 is the approx. number of schools in Bulgaria, of which 2600 are Secondary comprehensive schools

460 is the approx. number of schools in Sofia town, of which 370 are Secondary comprehensive schools



3. State the rates of students completing their secondary education

795 000 is the approx. number of students involved in the Secondary education in Bulgaria
120 000 is the approx. number of students involved in the Secondary education for Sofia town

4. State the rates of students completing their upper secondary education

5489 is the number of dropout students from primary education
22480 is approx. number for Secondary schools



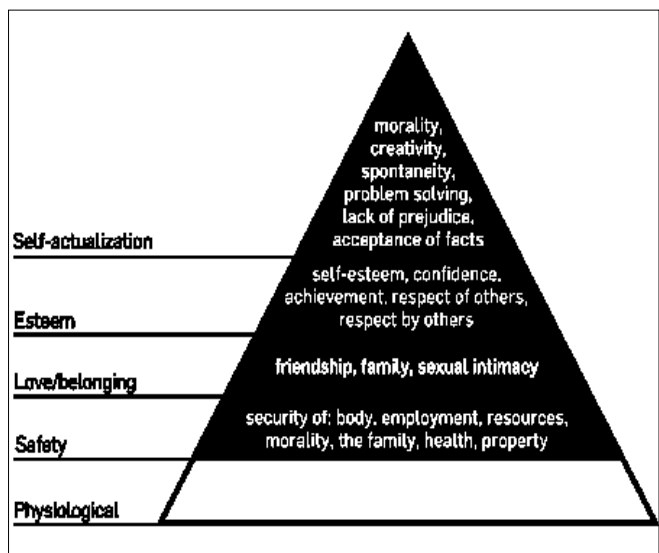
Within the framework of discussions with experts in local authorities and in local support group was given a new meaning of the term “social solidarity”.

It was rationalized like satisfying of necessity for personal improvement, respect and self-respect between all the participants in educational process, active including of parents in school community. Improvement of education doesn't lead to cessation of social inequality in education. Nevertheless of all the efforts, the education continues to produce social inequality.

Unequal chance at the beginning, because of the social, economic and cultural surround where children live, brings unequal results.

Effective care may in parts resolve the problem with equal chances at the beginning. Students lead the school, if it's necessary, to adaptation to their possibilities and needs. Besides all the preventives precautions, good care for students suppose also and access to qualitative education and effectives, socializing, supporting Family, Child, Teacher precautions.

It's a right to every student to receive qualitative education, besides of resources of his family.





IV. SWOT ANALYS, AVAILABLE RESOURCES, STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

On the basis of realized good practices and educational models for integration and prevention of dropout of school, the local support group developed the following analyses:

1. SWOT Analys – local authority/ educational institutions/ supporting environment

Strength	Faults
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engaged administrative managements of educational institutions - Work on projects - All day organization of trainings - School board - Suitable and effective forms for (non)obligatory forms of learning subjects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poor parent’s interest - Insufficient capacity and training for work with parents - Including of the group of coevals – student’s self-government - Effectiveness of internal support environment
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interactive training and civil education - Reintegration of dropouts of school - Internal school qualification - School board – work with parents of children in risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Insufficient financial resources - Inefficiency of the precautions for parents and families – impracticable sanctions - Low social – economic status of families and intense migrant demographic flood

2. Model/Precautions/Planning/Monitoring

Precautions on municipal level	Precautions on the level of educational institutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social-economic support – canteen feeding, free manual and extra school appliances, package extra activities supporting all day organization of education - Financial stimulation of reintegration - Modernization of material base and didactic means - Insurance of safe environment - Insurance of extra forms of outclass and out school activities, supporting of centers for work with children, sport camp, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improvement of capacity of the educational institution – recognizing and sensibility to the problem with dropout of school, intern school qualification - Outclass activities, pointed to the interests and possibilities of the child/student - Interactivity of teaching process - Including of parents - Including of group of students self-government – the role and coevals/ group - Insurance of psychological environment, supporting educational and instructive process



Sources of information	Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Data from information system ADMIN - School papers and documentary - Contact with parents - Contact with students - Information system of the municipality - Questionnaires - Focus - groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Amount of dropout students - Amount of absents – excused and non-excused - Amount of children engaged in outclass activities - Amount of imposed punishments on students - Amount of imposed sanctions on parents - Amount of processed teacher – parent meetings and consultations - Amount of accomplished home visits - Amount of realized partnerships/ cooperation with outsource structures and NGOs, centers for work with children, etc.

V. MAIN GOALS

To provide conditions for the completion of a higher class and its equivalent educational level by implementing school and community programs and support to meet the needs and the needs of children at risk of dropping out of school.

Trough

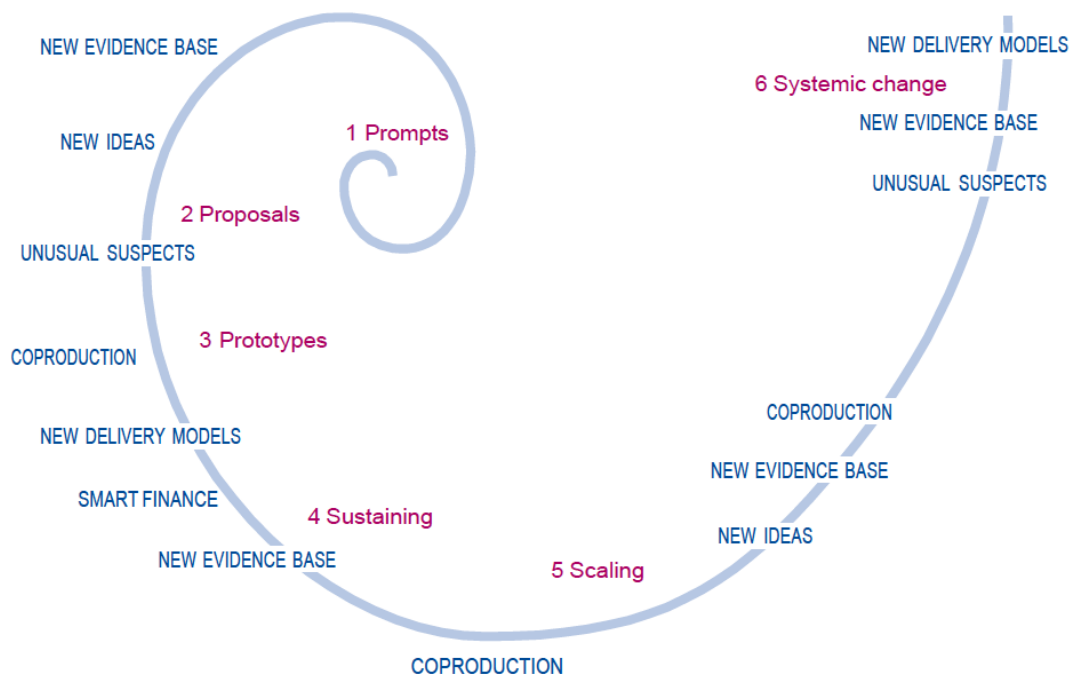
- Management of the prevention of dropout rates on school level
- Introduction of a mechanism for prevention of drop out on municipal level
- Implementation of activities in collaboration with other structures, parents, NGOs – support environment



IV. METHODOLOGY. MECHANISM FOR REALIZATION ON SCHOOL LEVEL

Management of prevention of school dropouts on school level

- Early identification of children at risk through periodical needs assessment.
- Research, evaluation and inclusion of all resources – school and community – in implementing activities to prevent school drop outs.
- Development of an annual school project on prevention as part of the school strategic plan, targeting the needs of children at risk of dropping out.
- Training of the pedagogic teams in identifying and solving social, educational, behavioral and other problems, which put children at risk.
- Development and implementation of trainings, out of class, out of school programs and support to motivate and keep children in school; counseling, professional and career consulting and active work with the family.
- Upkeep of database and personal files, individual plan and reports of results from the actions taken for every child at risk of dropping out.
- Review and assessment of implemented programs, approaches and results as per the set indicators and updating the measures introduced to keep the children in school.





On Municipal level

- Set the responsibilities of the educational management levels, school, local government and social services in regard to the prevention of school drop out in the legislation.
- Create a mechanism, rules and procedures to inform one another, coordinate the efforts, monitoring and evaluation of the implemented measures to prevent the school drop out on local level.
- Development of municipal policy and plans for inclusion and keeping the kids in school as a part of the municipal plan for development of the system of educational and social services, provided in the local community and provision of funding for the school prevention plans.
- Introduction of a municipal database of students who dropped out in the age obligatory for education. The database is created and maintained by structures in the municipal administration and is periodically updated through information provided by school principles.

Municipality – school

- Training school principles to manage the process of development, implementation and internal assessment of the results of the implementation of the measures for prevention.
- Link the school program for prevention with analysis of the specific characteristics, needs and expectations of the children, their parents and local community.
- Improvement of the professional skills of the school teams to identify problems, develop programs for individual support, to use different methods and motivation strategies to reach out to children at risk.
- Training on how to work with different groups of children at risk included in the education plans of the universities offering pedagogical education.
- Research and dissemination of good national and European school and community practices providing support and training for child development of children at risk.

Supporting activities

- Research of the expectations and requirements and inclusion of parents in the development of the program for prevention of school drop outs.
- Collaboration in the development of measures on local and school level in partnership with NGOs and other state structures.
- Provision of services for parents – programs, activities for the improvement of parenting skills; family counseling; trainings for parents and teachers; theme seminars on issues of children rights etc.
- Coordination and joint activities between school teams, social services, local government against parents who stop their children's education and support for families whose socio-economic status puts their children at risk.
- Provision of information to the school teams for good national and international practices in regard to collaboration between school and parents, parents participation in school life, programs targeted at parents – informal training, counseling etc.

VII. DUSSEMINATIUN PLAN

Dissémination level	Who	What	How	When
Local/ Régional level	PP core team Parents Association; Pedagogical staff from the 3 Pilot schools in Sofia	Training Of Teachers - aiming to raise the professional capacity of teachers for successful motivation and work with students from high risk groups, aiming a prevention of dropout of school	Training for 3 pilot schools; group and individual assignments;	November 2013
	PP core team and Parents Association	Local dissemination meetings in the 3 pilot schools aim to assess the specific needs of the parents of Roma students from the 3 selected project pilot schools	World Coffee method for 3 sessions in the 3 pilot schools* 1 per month in school	December 2013 - March 2014
	Parents Association Pedagogical staff from the 3 Pilot schools in Sofia	Organization and conduct of 3 school / local campaigns for preparation of PREVENT week at school event	Workshop for teachers and parents	March 2014
	PP core team Parents Association; Pedagogical staff from the 3 Pilot schools in Sofia	PREVENT Week at school – trough Develop of presentation materials / products for each school - information on best practices, information for parents - a parent's guidebook, local events, etc.	Champaign and school presentations in the 3 pilot schools	April 2014
	Sofia PP team ULSG group Parents Association	Organization of municipal campaign for dropout prevention titled "Familatlon" as a holiday for children and parents, families and school community	Champaign and school presentations in the 3 pilot schools	April 2014
	Sofia PP team ULSG group Parents Association	Presentation of the Local Action plan via round tables and interested parties (pedagogical staff, NGOs, local politicians, school board representatives from the three pilot schools in Sofia, to present a summary of the project, initial results from the forums, feedback and create recommendations for implementation program	Forum meeting	At the end of school year 2013/2014

National	Sofia PP team ULSG group Parents Association	Publications on local media And usage of the social media channels	Communication Within the project and especially for each of the local project events	Ongoing
	Sofia PP team Parents Association	Creating a Parents' guidebook - for parents for each of the three pilot schools in Bulgarian and in English	Written guide book for the 3 pilot schools in BG and in ENG	April 2014 – September 2014
	External supplier	Creation of a documentary video movie about PREVENT week and campaign in Sofia in 50 DVD copies in BG language with ENG subtitles	External expertise for creation of a documentary Video	April – June 2014
	Sofia PP team ULSG group	Dissemination of information through inner platforms and educational channels, partners websites, etc.	Sofia Municipality' website Social media Partners emails	Ongoing
Transnaciona I	Sofia PP team	Participation in other EU events and meetings	Dissemination of information and materials	Ongoing

VIII. Indicators for Quality of LAP

- Secured programmatic support of the integration process- extracurricular activities, a Municipal program developed;
- Informed and motivated parents and community members- considerable increased number of people attending the parents meetings and community open forums, different types of information – “Familatlon” days, discussions with parents and students at school; yearly parent involvement in school life, etc.;
- Collaboration with Sofia Municipal and Sofia Children Center using the methods of formal and non-formal education;
- Training teachers about causes and effects of aggression and harassment among students, about the ways for identifying children-victims of domestic violence;
- Teach and help parents how to understand and communicate with their children;
- Pathfinder for family and for parents;
- Special developed Guidebook for parents – based on the experience in the 3 pilot schools



IX. YEAR PLAN OF THE SCHOOL YEAR ACTIVITIES 2013/2014 Г. (RESOURCES AND EXPECTED RESULTS IN THREE PILOT SCHOOLS IN SOFIA)

Priority field/ Purpose			
Activity	Lead institution/ organization	Resources/ Mechanism	Expected results
Creating training programs for children of high risk groups in extra educational forms	54 St. Ivan Rilski Secondary School 88 Dimitar Popnikolov Secondary School 106 Grigorii Tzamlak Secondary School	organization of educational process with poor students in junior high school stage; Projects aiming to provide financial resources for the activity (materials and securitization for 1 teacher – 10 training hours per week)	Reduction of the amount of non-excused absents; Raised motivation for regular going to school class, by presenting product made by the student, connected to educational program. Established habits for working and studying; Increasing the grades.
Development of manuals for social needy and high risk groups.	NGO Sofia Municipality Ministry of labor and social policy Pilot Schools	Projects aiming to provide financial resources for the recent activities	Raising grades of students from high risk groups and social needy families.
Improvement of professional skills of school teams to identify the problems, to elaborate programs for individual support, to apply various methods and motivation strategies with children threatened of dropout of school.	Association “Parents” SM Directorate on “Education”	Projects aiming to provide financial resources for the activity In November 2013 a training was held in Sofia for 12 teachers from 3 pilot schools.	Raising the professional capacity of teachers for successful motivation and work with students from high risk groups, aiming a prevention of dropout of school.



Increasing the parent's capacity , purposing their motivation for including them into the school life – "Parents School"	Association "Parents" NGOs SM experts Prevent team ULSG members	Development of different panels for discussion with parents titled: "Parents School" – modules; „Aggression between children – how to handle it”; “Why the child can't make if at school”; “The part of parents for successful integration of the child in school”, etc.	Active including of parents in school life. Provided Feedback and proper communication with parents in the school Reducing of early dropout of school – early marriages. Change in values of parents concerning education and the school life of their kids.
Creating of supporting environment by involving parents and students from high risk groups and social needy families.	88 th High school New Bulgarian University	Organizing joint projects aiming to provide financial resources for the activity for reconstruction and sustainable development of the school	Active including of parents in school life. Creating new attitude of parents to education. Parents involvement in extra curriculum school activities
Improvement of professional skills of school teams to to apply various methods and raise motivation strategies with children threatened of dropout of school.	Association "Parents" New Bulgarian University	Projects aiming to provide financial resources for the activity	Increasing of professional capacity of teacher for successful motivation and work with students from high risk groups aiming a prevention of dropout of school.
Enhance the motivation of students and parents for active participation in school life throw outclass activities.	54 St. Ivan Rilski Secondary School 88 Dimitar Popnikolov Secondary School 106 Grigorii Tzamlak Secondary School	All day form of education and participation in projects aiming to provide information, ideas and resources for the PREVENT activity.	Increasing of motivation of students for school work and regular going to school classes. Insuring of personal expression of students.
Establishment of informed environment for	54 St. Ivan Rilski Secondary School 88 Dimitar	Preparing of inform materials, flyers with instructions for culture	Improvement of culture of behavior of students and forming of skills for



the activities, mechanisms and results from the integration.	Popnikolov Secondary School 106 Grigorii Tzamlak Secondary School	of behavior of students.	regarding the rules.
PREVENT School celebration with children, parents and teachers Familatlon initiative	3 pilot schools Parents Association ULSG members SM project team	Provided model for the formation of community schools with involving parents - Familatlon school as a celebration of sport and a healthy lifestyle. Using interactive methods, groups of teachers and parents have adapted the model to their ideas for inclusion.	Parents to take decisions related to school events happening to them involved with at school. When this happens together with teachers, among them creating a relationship of trust which is the basis for the prevention of dropping out of school.
Manual for Parents trough collecting personal information from any school handbook and summarizing and analyzing	Parents Association ULSG members SM project team	Survey interview was created, as included conducting its visit to each of the schools. Collected empirical information is in the process of processing, systematization and analysis.	Planning and organizing long-term information campaign by the school and seeking feedback from parents. Planning school events with the participation of parents as dropout prevention. Education of class teachers and skills development for targeted communication with the families of their students.
A documentary movie about parental involvement	ULSG members External expertise	Video edition and recording the process within the work of ULSG in Sofia;	Developed educational movie for the main concept and ideas for parental involvement



X. CONCLUSIONS

The plain review of present sources of information about the actions of public institutions pointed to prevention of dropout of school give the possibility to make a few recommendations:

- ✓ It's necessary to build united system for evaluation of risk of dropout of school, where all the institutions engaged with education, child's protection and social protection will be involved. It's also necessary to that system to have good coordination between different levels of management – school, local, regional and national authorities;
- ✓ Absolutely necessary is that the precautions for prevention of dropout of school to enlarge their range and to include the children in age group between 12 and 16;
- ✓ It's necessary to develop purpose precautions for prevention, pointed to overcoming of educational reasons for dropout of school for each one of stages of education (purpose financing of all day education, diagnostic materials for early finding of educational difficulties, early professional orientation and preparation, programs stimulating reading and studying in Bulgarian, etc.);
- ✓ It's important to take precautions for reintegration of dropped out children in two directions: recovering programs for dropouts for one term to one school year who still can be turned out regular cycle of education; the other is for dropouts for more than an year for who other suitable forms of education should be looked for;
- ✓ The success of public policies for prevention and reducing the dropping out of school depends on earning of big public support and the most on including parents. That's the direction that the institutions should point their efforts, also in communication and in creating partnerships for fulfilling of effectives precautions in every level of management.
- ✓ Creating and following the annual plan for attracting parents to participate in school activities and school events that the school coordinator at the local level.
- ✓ Making at least one year information campaign on the opportunities offered by parents to participate in school life.
- ✓ Regular use of search tools feedback from parents - as polls the school to monitor the change of the needs of parents.



Sofia ULSG members – institutions, experience, expertise

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URBACT is a European exchange and learning programme promoting sustainable urban development. It enables cities to work together to develop solutions to major urban challenges, reaffirming the key role they play in facing increasingly complex societal challenges. It helps them to develop pragmatic solutions that are new and sustainable, and that integrate economic, social and environmental dimensions. It enables cities to share good practices and lessons learned with all professionals involved in urban policy throughout Europe. URBACT is 181 cities, 29 countries, and 5,000 active participants. URBACT is co-financed by the ERDF Funds and the Member States.

www.urbact.eu/project
www.urbact.eu/prevent

