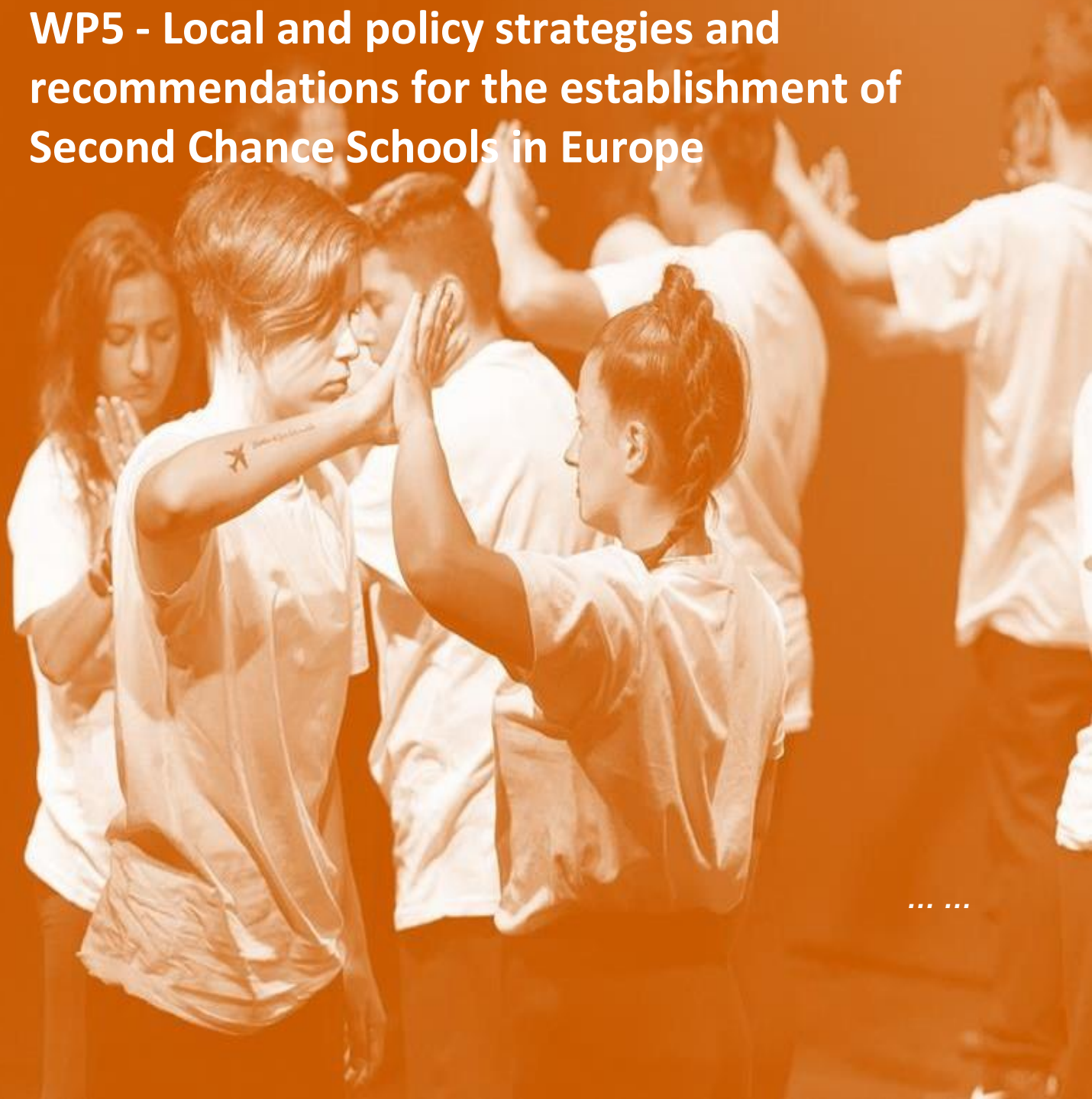




S2CENE

## D5.4 SECOND CHANCE SCHOOLS' RECOMMENDATIONS

### WP5 - Local and policy strategies and recommendations for the establishment of Second Chance Schools in Europe



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# STRENGTHENING SECOND CHANCE NETWORKS IN EUROPE



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These Recommendations (D.5.4) are published by the S2CENE project consortium, formed by five organizations – AE2O (Portugal), E2C (France), NBU (Bulgaria), DANTE (Croatia), Inova+ (Portugal).

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## Contents

<b>1. Context</b>	...
<b>2. Introduction to the S2CENE approach</b>	...
<b>3. Presentation of the Framework and Toolkit for Second Chance Schools (D1.2 and D13)</b>	...
<b>4. Capacity building of organisations and professionals for the use of the Second Chance Schools accreditation model (D2.2)</b>	...
<b>5. Capacity building of SCS professionals (D4.2, D4.2 and D4.3)</b>	...
<b>6. Promotion and maintenance of the SCS Centre for Mobility, Training and Research (D5.3)</b>	...
<b>7. Second Chance Schools' recommendations</b>	...
<b>8. Conclusions and call to action</b>	...



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## 1. Context

This deliverable results from the events implemented with policy makers and aims at providing guidelines and policy recommendations for the implementation of the S2CENE approach for:

- Strengthening the existing and establishing new Second Chance Schools (SCS) in Europe
- Establishing new national or regional networks of SCS for young adults' education;
- Social and economic recognition of the Second Chance Schools and related networks as an effective approach for adults' education.

Addressed to policy makers, experts & professionals from the SCS, from the field of education & research, adult education and social & professional inclusion from different European countries and European networks of SCS and adult education, this document intends to update the Second Chance Schools policy measure of the 1995 White Paper, reflecting on the main challenges that the SCS measure is facing today in Europe.

### **Second Chance Schools as a policy measure of the 1995 “White Paper”**

Second chance Schools are a policy measure created in 1995 by the European Commission “White Paper on Education and Training - Teaching and Learning, Towards the Learning Society”.

At the turn of the century, the White Paper identified three main and profound social changes that radically and lastingly were transforming our societies - the information society, scientific and technological changes and globalization. These radical changes were challenging Europe to become a learning society. For this reason, the two main responses focused on the White Paper were, first, to give everyone access to knowledge and, second, to promote the development of their abilities for employment and the participation in economic life.

To address these challenges, the Commission defined five general objectives:

- encourage the acquisition of new knowledge
- bring schools and business sector closer together
- combat exclusion
- develop proficiency in three community languages
- treat capital investment and investment in training on an equal basis.

The third objective, “combat exclusion”, aims to respond to the different categories of the population that are at risk of being “left by the wayside” (young people without qualifications, older workers, longterm unemployed, women re-entering the job market). Even recognizing that member States have launched a series of measures to help vulnerable groups to access knowledge and finding employment, the Commission considers that supplementary measures are needed and therefore decides to launch two types of pilot schemes to combat exclusion and develop a sense of belonging: second chance schools and voluntary service for young people.

The basic idea of the Second Chance Schools in the White Paper of 1995 was “to provide youngsters excluded from the education system, or about to be, with the best training and best support arrangements to give them self-confidence”. The White Paper is concerned with the “tens of thousands” of disadvantaged youths excluded from the school system, in the major conurbations, and that, without qualifications, they have little hope of finding a job and integrating into society.

The second chance schools project proposal was built on the experience of some pilot projects in the USA, Israel and some EU member states, and in the lessons learned with these experiences. The White Paper refers that SCS cannot mean "ghettoschools" and that they must be equipped with additional resources and employing the best teachers, if necessary paying a higher than normal salary, providing new incentives, arranging in-company training, using multimedia and running classes containing fewer pupils. Also, in problem areas, where social and family values are generally collapsing, SCS must be “an educational meeting place for the community where teachers are present outside school hours”, addressing the “entire school population of a deprived area, to avoid any form of segregation”.

The 4 aims defined for the SCS scheme were:

- . Reintegrate young people without qualifications and living in deprived areas in SCS schemes, refashioning existing schools or setting up new centres of learning.
- . Provide pupils with highly competent and well-paid teachers;
- . Develop motivation, the ability to learn how to learn, basic knowledge and social skills.
- . Reduce class-sizes.

Animated by these intentions, the White Paper proposes a set of measures to ensure the success of this new provision:

- . Assemble European funds for setting up pathways to integration.
- . Introduce measures involving consultation and partnership with the economic players to augment opportunities for integration into employment when training is completed.
- . Arrange, at the start of any training pathway, personal sponsorship by a local SME or major company, if possible, backed up by a promise of employment if the relevant qualifications or skills recognition are obtained.
- . Adopt teaching approaches customized in terms of pace and drawing on the new educational technologies.
- . Network second chance schemes and spread pedagogical methods.
- . Closely associate families with the school's activities and approach.
- . Make full use (in association with companies) of information and multimedia technologies.
- . Develop, on an intensive basis, sports and cultural activities

In the generous strategic vision of the White Paper 1995, “combating social exclusion and ensuring that no one is “left by the wayside” would make Europe not simply a free trade area but a space for the personal fulfilment of its citizens, men and women”

## 2. Introduction to the S2CENE approach

The main aim of Erasmus + KA3 “S2CENE” project has been the promotion of the concept of Second Chance Schools (SCS) and the establishment of national/regional networks of SCS for young adults’ education, contributing to strengthen the importance of this measure in the European and National educational policies and for the reinforcement of the capacity of existent SCS and the creation of new SCS in European countries.

To achieve this objective, S2CENE consortium developed a strategic approach aimed at strengthening local, regional and national interinstitutional and interdepartmental cooperation, contributing to a new paradigm of intervention with young people, promoting their qualification, personal development and social and professional inclusion.

Within the scope of the S2CENE project, the international partnership worked for 3 years on a set of products, from the identification and study of European and national reference documents, the consultation of professionals and stakeholders, the mapping of elements of common understanding and a framework and recommendations to support the development and expansion of second chance schools and programs across Europe.

The current recommendations are based on the experience and perspective of S2CENE partners, as well as on the analyse of the situation of SCS in Europe and the challenges they are facing today, and were validated in the 3 national conferences that were held in the partner countries, Portugal, Croatia and Bulgaria, involving policy makers, institutions and professionals

## 3. Presentation of the Framework and Toolkit for Second Chance Schools (D1.2 and D13)

The “Framework and Toolkit for Second Chance Schools in Europe - Collective research” is a key deliverable of the pan-European project S2CENE, supported by Erasmus+ program. It offers an outline of historical and current developments in the field of Second Chance Education on European level, highlights key perspectives of stakeholders and good practices and methods in the field, and proposes a framework of policy recommendations for future development of the Second Chance Education field in Europe.

The collective research stresses the importance of second chance education as a bridge to enable young people to return to education and/or to insert in the labour market, enlarging their perspectives in achieving a higher quality of life.

The methodology combines desk research with field work, contributing to understand the nature and characteristics of Second Chance Schools, their learning methods, techniques and activities, competencies and characteristics required by professionals to be successful and which are the minimum requirements to establish and maintain a Second Chance School. The evidence gathered sustains the proposed framework of Second Chance Schools, fostering further the process of co-



design of strategies and plans of accreditation models of such schools across Europe and capacity building activities for organizations and professionals.

The research findings and conclusions support policy recommendations and a roadmap of actions for further development and promotion of second chance education in Europe, at the national and EU levels.

The document concludes that the Second Chance Schools approach shows that disadvantaged young people, without basic skills and qualifications, can be helped and reintegrated into society. The methods used can be a source of inspiration, both in preventing school failure and in second-chance education for those for whom initial prevention did not work. It draws attention to the much that those who leave school and training have to offer, which our societies cannot afford to waste, in a time of aging populations, more restrictive labor markets and a knowledge society demanding high levels of qualification. The European "second chance" policy initiated more than 25 years ago was reaffirmed over the years by a set of subsequent European guiding documents and initiatives on the ground that confirmed the opportunity and need for this measure, as a response to the serious social problem represented by early leaving and social exclusion of young people in Europe. In addition to actively participating in the work of socio-professional integration of young people, second chance schools also contribute to the pedagogical and organizational renewal of education and training systems and to the expansion of education into the public sphere, reinforcing the community dimension of education.

#### 4. Capacity building of organizations and professionals for the use of the Second Chance Schools accreditation model (D2.2)

The Second Chance Schools Accreditation Model proposed by S2CENE project is based on a comprehensive framework for the establishment of accreditation systems for these schools, ensuring that they meet specific criteria, deliver high-quality education, and effectively support young people at risk of social exclusion. Throughout the document, the key components of the accreditation model are discussed, including its principles, goals, key concepts, organizational structures involved in accreditation, and the responsibilities of accredited organizations. The document also highlights the importance of intersectoral and interinstitutional partnerships, collaboration with companies, and post-training support for students. Additionally, the document emphasises the need for continuous improvement, ethical conduct, and adherence to legal and regulatory frameworks. By outlining the structure and principles of the SCS accreditation model, this document serves as a

valuable resource for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders interested in improving the educational opportunities and social integration of disadvantaged youth in Europe. SCS accreditation model guarantees that they are integrated into national legal frameworks, which may differ from country to country, and regulate, among others, the objectives of this measure and its target groups. The SCS are developed as a national subsystem, with a dynamic national and transnational cooperation, participating in common projects and partnerships, research, sharing of good practices, transfer of innovation, mobility of young people and professionals, training of professionals and capacity building of organizations, as an important contribution to the qualification of their educational offer. Accreditation is implemented by the National Networks, through a peer-to-peer approach, monitoring indicators concerning the quality of the training developed, the results obtained by the trainees, compliance with the normative and regulatory frameworks in force, the qualification and adequacy of human resources, activity and training plans and the logistics of spaces and equipment.

## 5. Capacity building of SCS professionals (D4.2, D4.2 and D4.3)

The S2CENE Capacity Building Plan is part of the collaborative work focused on supporting and promoting Second Chance Schools (SCS) in Europe, as essential educational institutions to help vulnerable young people reintegrate into education and society. In the framework of the S2CENE project, the Capacity Building Plan serves as a structured approach to enhance the knowledge and skills of SCS facilitators and staff, aiming to support vulnerable young people effectively. By ensuring adherence to accreditation standards, it upholds programme quality, promotes innovative teaching methods, and fosters adaptability. The plan ultimately seeks to improve learner success, encourage professional growth, and create a collaborative community among SCS professionals, positively impacting the lives of the learners they support.

The Capacity Building Plan is linked to other S2CENE results and materials. Firstly, it is a direct continuation of the Profile of SCS Professionals, which outlines the key characteristics, competences, and qualifications expected of facilitators and staff working within the SCS system. Its primary purpose is to provide a clear and comprehensive guideline for recruiting, training, and evaluating SCS professionals. By defining the necessary skills, knowledge, and personal attributes, the profile ensures that professionals are well-prepared to address the unique challenges and educational needs of vulnerable young people who have left the traditional schooling system.

It is further supported by the Toolkit for the Capacity Building Programme, a practical and comprehensive resource for implementing a structured capacity-building programme for professionals working in Second Chance Schools (SCS). It provides a range of necessary tools, strategies, and materials to enhance their skills and competences.

The Capacity Building Plan aims to foster a transformation in knowledge, skills, and attitudes among SCS staff and facilitators, enabling them to address the challenges of modern teaching and learning effectively. By aligning with EU policies, the plan seeks to elevate the quality of education in SCS, emphasizing inclusivity, personalised learning, and the development of transferable skills, equipping SCS professionals with the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes to provide marginalised youth with educational experiences that promote social justice and lifelong learning.

## 6. Promotion and maintenance of the SCS Centre for Mobility, Training and Research (D5.3)

S2CENE developed a range of activities to support the consortium in structuring and validating local and policy strategies and recommendations for the establishment of Second Chance Schools in Europe. These strategies and recommendations were prepared with the inputs of policy makers, experts and professionals and are also based on the partners experience. The S2CENE consortium worked to strengthen local/regional cooperation partnerships between territorial entities working in education and training, health, justice and protection and research, contributing to the affirmation of a new paradigm of local/regional intervention of guidance and support for young people and promoting their qualification, development and social and professional inclusion. The conditions were also prepared for the development of a new instrument that will result from this project, the new Mobility, Training and Research Centers, which will promote innovation in local/regional networks and their impact at European level.

The new Mobility, Training and Research Centers, AGORA, will support cooperation and the sharing of practices between SCS in Europe, support relevant research to SCS intervention, innovation and sustainability, promote the mobility of young people and professionals between SCS from different European countries and provide training opportunities for professionals in SCS, essential for their development and professional recognition.

## 7. Policy recommendations for updating the Second Chance Schools 1995 “White Paper” policy measure

The reasons behind the decision to create SCS with the White Paper 1995 clearly still stand. The Europe 2020 Strategy, which defined as one of its main targets the reduction of early leaving in Europe to less than 10%, has produced an undeniable improvement in the qualifications of young Europeans. However, this problem still presents large variations across the EU, ranging from 2.3% in Croatia to 15.6% in Romania.

The continuous decline in the rate of ELET (early leaving from education and training) must not make us forget that there are still many reasons to be concerned about the qualifications of young Europeans. The average rate of early leavers from education and training is still around 10% in Europe (9,9% in 2020). There was a significant decrease in some European countries, but remained stable or even increased in several others, evidencing in this way its structural profile in European educational systems. In absolute numbers, early leaving still affects several million young people in Europe (altogether they are equivalent to the entire population of a medium-sized European country such as, for example, Denmark). Also, the high percentage of young adults not in education, employment or training (NEET), suggests a worrying tendency that leaving formal education in most cases is not a temporary life situation, but can transform into a long-term pattern, with a negative effect on the overall situation of employment and training of younger people. These low levels of education are one of the main causes of youth unemployment and vulnerability to poverty, particularly affecting young people from disadvantaged social classes and, in general, the most vulnerable social groups, in their social and professional integration processes. While the EU is trying to offer an increasingly high-quality education for young people, at the same time, around one in ten young people leave school and training early, without the right qualifications. Today, young people are changing jobs more frequently, taking longer to establish themselves in the job market. Ensuring a smooth transition between education and work and reducing the risks of marginalization for early leavers have become central objectives of European cooperation in education and is undoubtedly an important indicator of the quality of our educational and social systems and of our democracies.

Not only the reasons behind the decision to create SCS are still valid as it would be important to revisit some of the good intuitions of the founding document and go back to some of the “White Book” unfulfilled promises:

- SCS must be educational meeting places for the community, addressing the entire school population, avoiding any form of segregation.
- SCS cannot mean "ghettoschools" and they must be equipped with additional resources and employing the best teachers, “If necessary paying a higher than normal salary”, providing new incentives, in-company training, multimedia and running classes with fewer pupils.

In most European countries, there is no integrated knowledge about the situation of qualification and social and professional integration of young people. The various indicators on the reality of young people's lives show worrying figures of youth unemployment, youth poverty and early leaving from education and training.

There is also not much social awareness about the large number of young people who are out of school, demanding specific compensation measures. All the available numbers indicate that the number of disadvantaged youths excluded from the school system in Europe is not in the order of “tens of thousands”, as suggested in the White Paper, but rather in the order of several millions.

Reducing early leaving while ensuring the quality of education and training responses and the social and professional integration of young people is therefore a central objective of European cooperation and a very important indicator of the quality of our social systems and our democracy.

As stated in European and national documents, in the learning society in which we live, social stratifications are increasingly based on the demarcation lines between those “who have” and those “who don't have” skills and qualifications. Dropping out of school has more lasting consequences than in previous decades. It can mark an individual for life and radically narrow the scope of his life projects. The main locus of action to address school failure and social exclusion is the local, schools, neighbourhoods and cities. The national contribution is essential to ensure the financial sustainability of local initiatives, and to recognize the effort invested and the qualifications that students acquire in these schemes. At national level, the debate on the prevention of school leaving and the generalization of good practices in combating school leaving must be intense and continuous. The European level can be of great value in networking these initiatives. In doing so, it helps to mobilize teachers and students and allows for the comparison of results, the identification of good practices and consistent feedback in the policy process at European level. The three levels therefore have an important role to play in combating school dropout and social exclusion.

The findings and conclusions from current research allow for proposing two groups of policy recommendations for further development and promotion of second chance education in Europe. The first group is focussed on recommendations for political support at the national level. The second line of recommendations tries to provide roadmap of actions on EU level.

## 1. Political support at national level

The national level is essential to provide material, human and expert resources for the functioning of a second chance school. Depending on the level at which decisions are made for school funding, attention should also be paid to the regional/local level. There should be in each country a national strategy to address early leaving, as European policy documents consistently recommend, but there should be also a local (or regional) approach as the needs of young people are not the same everywhere but also because the needs of the labour market are different everywhere. Concrete recommendations for this level can be summarised as follows:

- To increase the visibility of the social problem of low qualifications and social exclusion of young people and of the available policy measures addressing it, such as second chance education and schools.
- To set up and strengthen national policies to reduce ELET, supported by comprehensive strategies that include an articulated framework of prevention, intervention and compensation measures.
- To create and strengthen national networks of practices and cooperation between different relevant actors, including second chance initiatives and schools' networks.
- To support evidence-based policies, promoting research on the situation of young people and the impact of second chance education measures, involving universities and researchers.
- To develop a systematic measurement system based on key quality performance indicators to monitor the quality of second chance educational services at national level.
- To reinforce the access and availability of distinctive and quality training opportunities in second chance education and schools provisions for early leavers.
- To increase the visibility of second chance education, improve communication with national, regional and local authorities and involve them in different events and policy debates.

## 2. Support at EU level.

The European dimension has indeed emerged as an essential vehicle for launching the idea and encouraging Member States to “joint learning” among themselves. Evidence suggests that many cities and local initiatives rely on EU support not just for funding, but also because it allows them to muster the goodwill, support and publicity needed to successfully take their projects forward from start to finish. The more awareness about them spreads, the more their attractiveness increases for both students and teachers. For Second Chance Schools to succeed, it was vital that they were perceived as different and 'better' than mainstream schools, and the European dimension certainly played an important role in conveying this image. It has also enabled disadvantaged young people, often confined to the narrow margins of a life of deprivation, to acquire the necessary skills to improve their lives. This “cultural revolution” in their lives will increase their sense of self-esteem, which is also important for the educators who help them succeed.

Networking between individual schools and their organizations at European level is important for improving quality of service through exchange of know-how and expertise. Furthermore, consolidating the “voice” of different players in the field would contribute to increased visibility and improved understanding by European Institutions of the need to ensure sustainable support for second chance education in Europe.

The recommendations at this level are:

- To keep the key target of reducing early leaving from education and training in the European agenda of education.

- To develop a systematic measurement system based on key quality performance indicators to monitor the quality of second chance educational services at EU level.
- To promote European cooperation and networking between second chance schools and practices, creating European Centres for Mobility, Research and Training and strengthening the European Network of Second Chance Schools, E2C Europe.
- To offer capacity building opportunities for organizations and professionals active in second chance education field;
- To promote the transfer of innovation developed in second chance education and schools to mainstream schools that could benefit from new approaches, such as learners' centred pedagogies, participation in decision-making processes, and inclusive approaches towards assessment and learner support.

## 8. Conclusions and call to action

The European Commission must support it, but it certainly cannot assume full responsibility in this matter. The main responsibility lies with the education authorities of the Member States, cities, schools and national and European associations and networks (E2C Europe), who are encouraged to continue to work towards the inclusion of those who most need project support.

Second Chance Schools approach shows one way in which disadvantaged young people without basic skills and qualifications can be helped and reintegrated into society. The methods used can be a source of inspiration, both in preventing school-failure in the first place, and in giving a second chance to those for whom initial prevention has not been possible.

We must not forget that those who have dropped out from school still have very much to offer and that, in appropriate circumstances, education establishments can unlock a wealth of resources which our societies might otherwise cast aside. At a time of ageing populations, tighter labour markets and the acceptance that our knowledge society as a whole calls for higher levels of qualification, this is a message we cannot afford to ignore.

The European "second chance" policy initiated more than 20 years ago has been reaffirmed over the years by a set of subsequent European steering documents and initiatives on the ground that have confirmed the opportunity and need for this measure, as a response to the serious social crisis represented by early leaving and social exclusion of young people in Europe.

In addition to actively participating in the work of socio-professional integration of young people, second chance schools also contribute to the pedagogical and organizational renovation of the education and training systems and the expansion of education to the public sphere, reinforcing the community dimension of education.

Second Chance Schools have been affirming the possibility of organizing effective training responses

for more vulnerable audiences who are resistant to traditional training processes. A Second Chance in education stands out today as an inclusive and holistic education proposal, which includes but is not limited to the vocational education dimension, which believes that it is always possible to start over and overcome experiences of failure, so often traumatic, and is developed not in terms of opposition but in dialogue and mutual learning with regular education and training provisions.





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