

# A.C.C.E.S.S project

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## Theoretical and typological model regarding the target groups at risk of Early school Leaving based on the situational and personal variables school-related



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## 1. Short description of IO1

The project ACCESS aims to tackle the problem of early school leaving (ESL) caused by school related factors, in a preventive and early intervention perspective, reinforcing pedagogical quality and innovation through the improvement of teachers' competences and the creation of a positive learning environment.

[The Typological Model Regarding the Target Groups at Risk](#) circumscribes some categories of students at risk of ESL, and each category is described by indicators which, through operationalization, can be monitored by teachers in order to prevent or reduce the ESL risk.

We identified the following typologies of students at ESL risk (see Chapter 3): 1. *students at ESL risk, where the risk is generated predominantly by deficient attitudes, behaviors, personal skills*; 2. *students at ESL risk, where the risk is generated predominantly by inadequate school behavior*; 3. *students at ESL risk, where the risk is generated predominantly by inadequate relational behavior*.

We mention that the indicators proposed for the description of each type (see Chapter 3) are identified exclusively based on the results obtained from the investigative approach from ACCESS project. Traditional ESL indicators - absenteeism, school non-succes, school failure, etc. - have been deliberately omitted, and they may be associated with any type of ESL student.

The research of the ESL phenomenon, in order to identify certain particularities of it and to develop a [Typological model – student at ESL risk \(IO1\)](#), has circumscribed two types of approaches: a quantitative approach, achieved through the development and administration of two questionnaires - one addressed to teachers and another addressed to students and early school leavers, and a qualitative approach based on designing and conducting in-depth interviews with students and focus-groups with teachers.

The dimensions explored in the *questionnaire addressed to teachers* and in *focus-groups with teachers* were the following: 1. Teachers perceptions of ESL and main causes of ESL; 2. Pedagogical, personal and communicational skills used to work with students; 3. Main causes of conflictual relations with students and resolute strategies used; 4. Challenges in daily work with students; 5. Representations/beliefs of the factors which can increase student commitment and student motivation; 6. School strategies to prevent ESL; 7. Teaching methods used to prevent the school disengagement.

The *questionnaire addressed to students and early school leavers* has been developed by reference to the following dimensions: 1. The thought about leaving school; 2. Motivations related to the wish to leave school; 3. Opinions about the potential reasons/causes why students leave school (from who have never thought about doing it); 4. Dimensions related to the school well-being; 5. Teaching methods used and their importance for engaging students; 6. Factors for improving school results.

Also, the *in-depth interviews for students and early school leavers* were conducted on the base of the same dimensions.

## 2. Theoretical framework

*Early school leaving* is a problem that concerns all member states of the European Union, generating social and individual effects with major negative impact, difficult to correct/control if effective preventive intervention strategies are not constantly assumed and implemented.

According with the meaning adopted by the EU Council „the term *early school leaving* is used in connection with those who leave education and training with only lower secondary education or less, and who are no longer in education and training” (EU COUNCIL, 2011, p. 1).

Through the Europe 2020 strategy, EU member states have established as target to reduce early school leaving to less than 10% by 2020, from 14,4% in 2009. In this regard, each country, depending on the early school leaving rate registered at national level, has proposed a specific target and strategies adapted to the particular mode of manifestation of ESL. Beyond measures taken at national level, strategies folded on the specificity of ESL in such different national contexts, it is necessary, as recommended by the EU Council, to promote the exchange of experiences and good practices, collaboration between countries to identify strategies and concerted actions, which converge to reduce this phenomenon, to increase the participation rate of those who are part of ESL risk groups and, implicitly, result in significantly improved educational results.

As shown in the study *Leaving education early: putting vocational education and training centre stage. Volume I*: “Early warning systems that collect data on a variety of risk factors can help authorities and practitioners to detect the first signs of risk of dropping out and to notice the less obvious learners at risk, supporting timely interventions (Cedefop, 2016, p. 119).

The purpose of the school and of the teachers is to identify in time not only certain undesirable behavioral manifestations of students, but also their causes, in order to design and apply appropriate intervention strategies, thus preventing school drop-out and, respectively, early school leaving. In this regard, „(...) an analysis at individual level is essential to understanding why a specific individual dropped out and what type of measures could help him or her come back to education and training” (Cedefop, 2016, p. 121).

To prevent, reduce and / or combat ESL, teachers and school management team „must ensure that education and training institutions and their learning environment (including the physical environment) provide a stimulating learning climate for all pupils. This includes equal access to quality education for all children and young people” (European Commission, 2013, p. 18).

### 3. Typological model – student at ESL risk

The synthesis of the results obtained in ACCESS project research (which will be presented in the next chapters of this report), taking into consideration the frequency of responses provided by target group members, allowed the pre-setting of the following typologies of students at ESL risk:

1. *students at ESL risk, where the risk is generated predominantly by deficient attitudes, behaviors, personal skills;*
2. *students at ESL risk, where the risk is generated predominantly by inadequate school behavior;*
3. *students at ESL risk, where the risk is generated predominantly by inadequate relational behavior.*

The placement in a certain type, by highlighting dominant factors, does not exclude the corroboration of these factors with others, specific to the other two types mentioned.

The ESL risk has an increased personal "nuance", being generated by the unique way in which personal factors are combined with factors associated with the school environment and, in particular, the family environment, but also with influences from the local community and society in general.

#### The indicators specific to the typologies of students with ESL risk

##### 1. Relevant indicators for students at ESL risk, where the risk is generated predominantly by deficient attitudes, behaviors, personal skills

- personal problems (the desire to work, the need for family reunification, health problems, etc.);
- behavioral deviations;
- aggressive behavior;
- poor socio-emotional skills;
- low effective communication skills;
- low self-esteem.

##### 2. Relevant indicators for students at ESL risk, where the risk is generated predominantly by inadequate school behavior

- learning difficulties;
- lack of interest in school tasks;
- school disengagement;
- behavioral deviations;
- personal problems (the desire to work, the need for family reunification, health problems, etc.);

- school allergy.

**3. Relevant indicators for students at ESL risk, where the risk is generated predominantly by inadequate relational behavior**

- poor socio-emotional skills;
- low effective communication skills;
- aggressive behavior;
- behavioral deviations;
- poor relational behaviors;
- personal problems (the desire to work, the need for family reunification, health problem, etc.).

**1. Relevant indicators for students at ESL risk, where the risk is generated predominantly by deficient attitudes, behaviors, personal skills**

Indicators	Descriptors (attitudinal / behavioral)
<b>Personal problems</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- he/she wants to go to work;</li> <li>- he/she manifests the need for family reunification;</li> <li>- he/she has health problems etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Behavioral deviations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- he/she refuses to respond to the teacher's requests;</li> <li>- he/she doesn't comply with the class/school rules;</li> <li>- he/she has attempts of fraud in the context of the administered evaluation tests;</li> <li>- he/she frequently interrupts didactic activity;</li> <li>- he/she distracts other colleagues from didactic activity;</li> <li>- he/she leaves the bank without the teacher's permission, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Aggressive behavior</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- he/she strikes / hurts / hits colleagues;</li> <li>- he/she destroys the belongings/goods of the school / colleagues / teachers;</li> <li>- he/she labels / teases / offenses / insults / humiliates / terrorizes colleagues;</li> <li>- he/she manifests a behavior of disobedience/opposition towards the teacher,</li> <li>- he/she develops hostile, negative and defiant behavior in their relationship with colleagues / teachers.</li> </ul>
<b>Poor socio-emotional skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- he/she has a weak empathic capacity;</li> <li>- he/she manifests reduced ability to identify and understand his/her own emotions and emotions of others;</li> <li>- he/she has reduced emotional management capacities (emotional self-control);</li> <li>- he/she manifests a low resistance to stress;</li> <li>- he/she demonstrates low resilience, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Low effective communication skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- he/she can't express, in a coherent, clear, persuasive way, their own ideas / thoughts, etc.;</li> </ul>

Indicators	Descriptors (attitudinal / behavioral)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- he/she has no initiative in communication;</li> <li>- he/she is not an active listener;</li> <li>- he/she manifests limited capacities to provide / receive feedback;</li> <li>- he/she has difficulty in harmonizing / effectively using the forms of communication (verbal, para-verbal, nonverbal).</li> </ul>
<b>Low self-esteem</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- he/she wrongly appreciates the difficulty of school tasks, by over-evaluating them;</li> <li>- he/she manifests a low level of self-confidence;</li> <li>- he/she manifests increased vulnerability / sensitivity to criticism;</li> <li>- he/she avoids to assert his/her opinions / to make decisions,</li> <li>- he/she frequently abandons the proposed tasks.</li> </ul>

**2. Relevant indicators for students at ESL risk, where the risk is generated predominantly by inadequate school behavior**

Indicators	Descriptors (attitudinal / behavioral)
<b>Learning difficulties</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- he/she has difficulties in focusing attention on school tasks;</li> <li>- he/she doesn't persevering in achieving the proposed purpose / objectives;</li> <li>- he/she manifests the tendency to move from one activity to another without completing any;</li> <li>- he/she does not perform its work independently;</li> <li>- he/she fails to respond adequately to the teacher's requests, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Lack of interest in school tasks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- he/she does not want to participate in solving school tasks;</li> <li>- he/she refuses to do his/her homework;</li> <li>- he/she avoids getting involved in school activities, regardless of their organization form (frontal, group, individual);</li> <li>- he/she hesitates to start a proposed activity;</li> <li>- he/she abandons an activity without being concerned about the completion of distributed tasks, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>School disengagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- he/she has a low motivation for learning;</li> <li>- he/she has a low satisfaction in relation to the school and with its own results;</li> <li>- his/her investment of affective, intellectual, material resources, in relation to the school, is reduced;</li> <li>- he/she registers a weak academic progress;</li> <li>- he/she doesn't participate in extracurricular/extra-scholastic activities, etc..</li> </ul>
<b>Behavioral deviations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- he/she refuses to respond to the teacher's requests;</li> <li>- he/she doesn't comply with the class/school rules;</li> <li>- he/she has attempts of fraud in the context of the administered evaluation tests;</li> <li>- he/she frequently interrupts didactic activity;</li> <li>- he/she distracts other colleagues from didactic activity;</li> <li>- he/she leaves the bank without the teacher's permission, etc.</li> </ul>

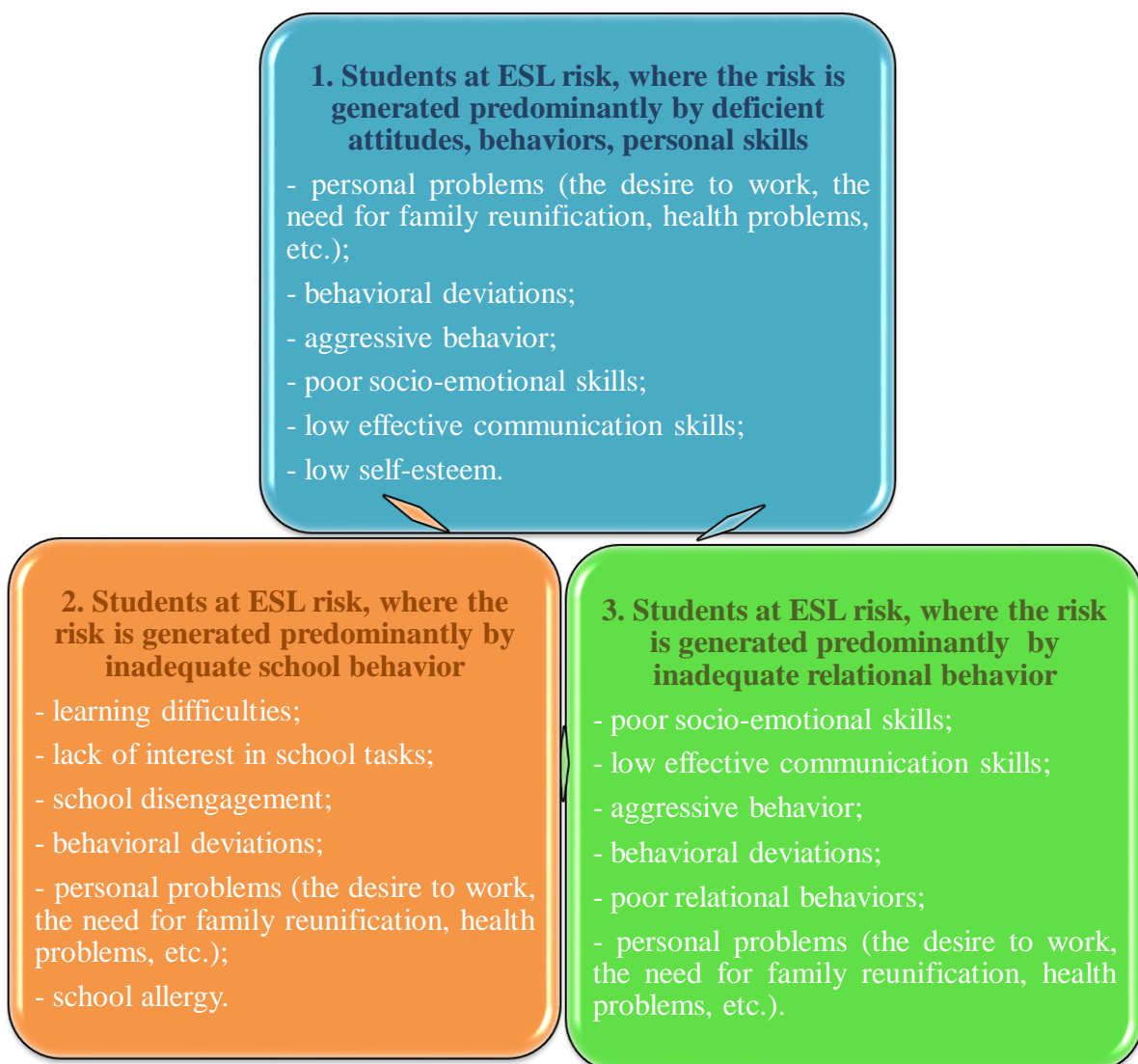


Indicators	Descriptors (attitudinal / behavioral)
<b>Personal problems</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- he/she wants to go to work,</li> <li>- he/she manifests the need for family reunification,</li> <li>he/she has health problems etc.</li> </ul>
<b>School allergy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- he/she manifests physical symptoms / physical pains associated with school problems;</li> <li>- he/she develops a feeling of fear, unrealistic, related to everything related to the school environment;</li> <li>- he/she shows repulsion towards school / fear of going to school;</li> <li>- he/she manifests aversion to learning activity;</li> <li>- he/she may manifest hostility / contempt for school authority, etc.</li> </ul>

**3. Relevant indicators for students at ESL risk, where the risk is generated predominantly by inadequate relational behavior**

Indicators	Descriptors (attitudinal / behavioral)
<b>Poor socio-emotional skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- he/she has a weak empathic capacity;</li> <li>- he/she manifests reduced ability to identify and understand his/her own emotions and emotions of others;</li> <li>- he/she has reduced emotional management capacities (emotional self-control);</li> <li>- he/she manifests a low resistance to stress;</li> <li>- he/she demonstrates low resilience, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Low effective communication skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- he/she can't express, in a coherent, clear, persuasive way, their own ideas / thoughts, etc.;</li> <li>- he/she has no initiative in communication;</li> <li>- he/she is not an active listener;</li> <li>- he/she manifests limited capacities to provide / receive feedback;</li> <li>- he/she has difficulty in harmonizing / effectively using the forms of communication (verbal, para-verbal, nonverbal).</li> </ul>
<b>Aggressive behavior</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- he/she strikes / hurts / hits colleagues;</li> <li>- he/she destroys the belongings/goods of the school/colleagues/teachers;</li> <li>- he/she labels / teases / offenses / insults / humiliates / terrorizes colleagues;</li> <li>- he/she manifests a behavior of disobedience/opposition towards the teacher,</li> <li>- he/she develops hostile, negative and defiant behavior in their relationship with colleagues / teachers.</li> </ul>
<b>Behavioral deviations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- he/she refuses to respond to the teacher's requests;</li> <li>- he/she doesn't comply with the class/school rules;</li> <li>- he/she has attempts of fraud in the context of the administered evaluation tests;</li> <li>- he/she frequently interrupts didactic activity;</li> <li>- he/she distracts other colleagues from didactic activity;</li> </ul>

Indicators	Descriptors (attitudinal / behavioral)
	- he/she leaves the bank without the teacher's permission, etc.
<b>Poor relational behaviors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- he/she manifest low ability to develop and maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships;</li> <li>- he/she shows low ability to make friends;</li> <li>- he/she tends to reject social interactions;</li> <li>- he/she develops a non-cooperative / hostile behavior;</li> <li>- he/she tends to self-isolate, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Personal problems</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- he/she wants to go to work,</li> <li>- he/she manifests the need for family reunification,</li> <li>- he/she has health problems etc.</li> </ul>



**Figure no 1. Typological model - student at ESL risk**

## 4. Results of the research of ESL phenomenon

### 4.1. Results from questionnaire addressed to teachers

**Profile of teachers from the target group:** Each partner country (Italy, Romania, Portugal, Lithuania) administered the questionnaire to a group of teachers in middle and upper school. Each group was represented by teachers of different age, subjects, school level and gender. The questionnaire was completed by 256 teachers, representing different domains: humanities, science, technologies, social and nature sciences, physical education, special education etc.

**Data analysis method:** The results obtained were subjected to quantitative and qualitative analysis.

**Findings:** We present below a comparative analysis of the results registered as a result of filling in the questionnaire provided to teachers, by respondents in the four countries partners.

#### 1. Teachers perceptions of ESL and main causes of ESL

One item of the questionnaire focused on ranking the potential causes of ESL generated by variables specific to the educational space, on a 1 to 10 scale (where 1 represents minimum level and 10 – maximum level), according to the extent to which the respondents considered that the causes mentioned may, by their frequency and intensity, generate ESL. These causes were grouped into five categories: *causes generated by variables specific to the education system, causes generated by variables related to school organization, causes generated by variables related the didactic personality of the teacher, causes generated by variables related to class and causes generated by variables specific to student.*

**Table no 1. The main causes of ESL generated by educational system-specific variables**

Italy	Lithuania	Portugal	Romania
1. inefficient educational policies, 2. deficient implementation of educational policies, 3. lack of consistent investment in CPD.	1. oversized curriculum, 2. deficient implementation of educational policies, 3. inefficient educational policies.	1. disagreement between the curriculum and the students' training needs, 2. inefficient educational policies, 3. oversized curriculum.	1. oversized curriculum, 2. insufficient number of school counselors / psychologists, 3. disagreement between the curriculum and the students' training needs.

In reference to causes generated by variables specific to the educational system, we note that the respondents in **Italy**, **Lithuania** and **Romania** rank first the aspects referring to *educational policies*, considered to be ineffective. Moreover, the teachers in **Italy** and **Lithuania** express their conviction

that the implementation of elements specific to education policies is deficient. The only country which does not rank the educational policies on the first three positions is **Romania**; however, those may be found on the next positions, respectively 4 and 5. In relation to the respondents' options, we see that *the educational policies* represent a sensitive point of the educational system in all countries partners to the project, and they represent a major cause generating ESL.

Furthermore, the comparative analysis of the distribution of the registered responses highlights another common element for the teachers in **Lithuania, Portugal** and **Romania**: they rank on first positions the aspects concerning the curriculum such as: *oversized curriculum* and *disagreement between the curriculum and the students' training needs*. The teachers in **Italy** also signal as possible cause of ESL, the disagreement between the curriculum and the students' needs, placing it on the fifth position. Consequently, as a possible measure to prevent ESL, it is necessary to rethink the school curriculum, in all four countries, or, a factor which teachers may control more easily, it is necessary to develop their capacity to select and process specific informational contents, so that students not to be overloaded with learning tasks, as well as other associated phenomena – school fatigue, stress, demotivation, depreciation of the school climate etc.

**Table no 2. The main causes of ESL generated by the school organization`s variables**

Italy	Lithuania	Portugal	Romania
1. oversized classes of students, 2. deficient management of interpersonal relationships, 3. lack of collegiality and collaboration among teachers.	1. oversized classes of students, 2. poor management of the school, 3. deficient management of interpersonal relationships.	1. oversized classes of students, 2. promoting exclusively cognitive education 3. disinterest in non-formal education and ignoring moral, socio-emotional education	1. oversized classes of students, 2. ignoring moral, socio-emotional education, 3. not assumed roles by school counselor / psychologist / social worker or non-existence of those persons

In terms of *causes generated by variables related to school organization*, it should be noted that the respondents believe that the main cause (position 1 for all countries partners to the project) is represented by *oversized classes of students*, as an effect of either defective educational policies, or bad decisions of school managers or inspectors. *The deficient management of interpersonal relationships, poor management of the school*, as well as *lack of collegiality and collaboration among teachers*, are causes ranked on the next two positions by teachers in **Italy** and **Lithuania**, highlighting the absence of an organizational culture and an appropriate climate at the school.

**Table no 3. The main causes of ESL generated by the teacher's personality variables**

Italy	Lithuania	Portugal	Romania
1. lack of empathy, 2. ignoring the emotional, social problems of students, 3. lack of emotional involvement	1. poor relationship with students, 2. lack of personalized psycho-pedagogical assistance, 3. low motivation or disinterest for CPD	1. failure in adapting the curriculum to the needs of students, 2. focus on cognitive / content-centered education, 3. routine didactic style	1. disinterest for the learning process, 2. lack of personalized psycho-pedagogical assistance, 3. ignoring the emotional, social problems of students

A third category was constituted by *causes generated by variables related to the teacher's personality*. In the options of the teachers in **Italy**, **Lithuania** and **Romania**, the first positions are represented by: *lack of empathy; ignoring the emotional, social problems of students; lack of emotional involvement; poor relationship with students; lack of personalized psycho-pedagogical assistance and disinterest for the learning process*. All these mentioned aspects refer to how teachers understand to build the relation with their own students and bring out either negligence toward/disregard of the student and of the relation with him/her, or an poor quality of the teachers' training in relation to emotional competences and a wrong reporting to the roles which they should assume in the educational process: facilitator, guide, provider of learning competences, coach, motivator etc.. The absence of some competences, some suitable attitudes from teachers entail impersonal relations with their students, with effects on the way they latter relate to school, to education and learning. The teachers in **Lithuania** rank on third position a factor which should not be overlooked: *low motivation or disinterest for CPD*. Analyzing the responses provided by the teachers in **Portugal**, they appreciated that the three main reasons are: *failure in adapting the curriculum to the needs of students*, aspect mentioned at other items as well, *focus on cognitive / content-centered education*, to the detriment of content centered on the student's needs and *the routine didactic style*.

**Table no 4. The main causes of ESL generated by the student class variables**

Italy	Lithuania	Portugal	Romania
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. the absence of a common set of values, principles, rules,</li> <li>2. lack of adherence to a common set of values, principles, rules,</li> <li>3. bullying / aggression / school violence,</li> <li>4. poor, conflicting/tense educational climate</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. lack of adherence to a common set of values, principles, rules,</li> <li>2. ignored / aggravated psychosocial phenomena,</li> <li>3. low level of interactions between classroom members,</li> <li>4. poor, conflicting/tense educational climate</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. the absence of a common set of values, principles, rules,</li> <li>2. lack of adherence to a common set of values, principles, rules,</li> <li>3. unfair distribution of responsibilities,</li> <li>4. deficient management of discipline problems</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. lack of adherence to a common set of values, principles, rules,</li> <li>2. bullying / aggression / school violence,</li> <li>3. deficient management of discipline problems,</li> <li>4. the absence of a common set of values, principles, rules.</li> </ol>

An interesting aspect concerns the *causes generated by variables related to students class* that the teachers in all partners countries rank on the first four positions *the absence of a common set of values, principles, rules* and/or *lack of adherence to a common set of values, principles, rules*.

Reflecting, in general, on the options placed on the first positions by teachers, we can appreciate that they can be generated by a communication deficit or an inefficient communication both between teachers and students, and at the level of the student-student relationship and student - group / class of students.

The choices also demonstrate that the respondents are aware of how important the normative culture of class is; nevertheless, they fail to build alongside their students a set of values, norms, rules sufficiently relevant to determine they latter to adhere to them, to internalize them and to develop relating behaviors, attitudes.

**Table no 5. The main causes of ESL generated by the student-specific variables**

Italy	Lithuania	Portugal	Romania
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. school disengagement,</li> <li>2. deficient perception of school experiences as irrelevant, insignificant, unnecessary,</li> <li>3. low self-esteem,</li> <li>4. hostility to school</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. low level of education,</li> <li>2. narrow general culture horizon,</li> <li>3. status of victim of bullying / school violence,</li> <li>4. deviant / delinquent behaviors.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. poor attachment of the student to school,</li> <li>2. school disengagement,</li> <li>3. deviant / delinquent behaviors,</li> <li>4. school failure.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. hostility to school,</li> <li>2. deficient perception of school experiences as irrelevant, insignificant, unnecessary,</li> <li>3. negative self-representation in relation to school requirements,</li> <li>4. poor attachment of the student to school.</li> </ol>

Given the results registered for the last category of causes – *causes generated by variables related to students* -, we may see that, according to their frequency, they divide as follows: *school disengagement (Italy and Portugal)*, *deficient perception of school experiences as irrelevant, insignificant, unnecessary (Italy and Romania)*, *hostility to school (Italy and Romania)*, *deviant/delinquent behaviors (Lithuania and Portugal)*, *poor attachment of the student to school (Portugal and Romania)*, *low self-esteem (Italy)*, *low level of education, narrow general culture horizon and the status of victim of bullying/school violence (Lithuania)*, *school failure (Portugal)*, *negative self-representation in relation to school requirements (Romania)*. Following analysis of results, we may see that the ESL causes are in general conditioned on how the student relates to school, to themselves, to their school experiences, to the school success or non-success, and also to their position/rank in class, their behaviors.

## 2. Pedagogical, personal and communicational skills used to work with students

In accordance with the dimension mention above, the respondents were requested to assess the importance of each specific professional competences/teachers` competences, on a 1 to 10 scale (where 1 – minimum level and 10 –maximum level), and then to appreciate the extent to which they possess such competences.

Below, there are presented teachers` competences that we used in the questionnaire, grouped into four categories:

- *specialty competences*: ability to select content, content processing and transmission capabilities, the ability to establish inter-, multi-, and trans-disciplinary connections;
- *psycho-pedagogical competences*: didactic design competences, the ability to formulate educational objectives, selecting and using appropriate teaching strategies, adapting to the age and individual peculiarities of the students, teaching skills specific to didactic communication, the ability to determine an optimal motivation of students, creating stimulating learning experiences, based on the principles of constructivist pedagogy and likely to produce the key competences claimed at European level, competences related to didactic assessment, reflexivity, pedagogical tact, didactic creativity;
- *psycho-social competences*: establishing the best educational relations with students, competence of active and empathic communication with students, competences to communicate with other colleagues, competences to communicate with parents, providing formative

feedback to all students, emotional competences, intercultural competences, adaptability, flexibility, equity in managing relationships with students;

- *managerial competences*: the ability to create an optimal learning environment, planning skills, organizing skills, control and evaluation skills, counseling skills, decision-making capacity, capacities to manage educational crisis situations.



**Table no 6. Evaluation of the specialty teachers' competences  
in terms of importance and own possession**

Importance			
Italy	Lithuania	Portugal	Romania
1. content processing and transmission capabilities, 2. ability to select content, 3. the ability to establish inter-, multi-, and trans-disciplinary connections.	1. content processing and transmission capabilities, 2. ability to select content, 3. the ability to establish inter-, multi-, and trans-disciplinary connections.	1. content processing and transmission capabilities, 2. ability to select content, 3. the ability to establish inter-, multi-, and trans-disciplinary connections.	1. ability to select content, 2. content processing and transmission capabilities, 3. the ability to establish inter-, multi-, and trans-disciplinary connections.
Possession			
Italy	Lithuania	Portugal	Romania
1. content processing and transmission capabilities, 2. ability to select content, 3. the ability to establish inter-, multi-, and trans-disciplinary connections.	1. content processing and transmission capabilities, 2. ability to select content, 3. the ability to establish inter-, multi-, and trans-disciplinary connections.	1. content processing and transmission capabilities, 2. ability to select content, 3. the ability to establish inter-, multi-, and trans-disciplinary connections.	1. ability to select content, 2. content processing and transmission capabilities, 3. the ability to establish inter-, multi-, and trans-disciplinary connections.

Following comparative analysis, we may see that, with regard to *specialty competences*, the respondents in **Italy, Lithuania** and **Portugal** set the exact same hierarchy in terms of both importance and possession: *content processing and transmission capabilities*, then *ability to select content* and on the last position *the ability to establish inter-, multi-, and trans-disciplinary connections*.

A slightly different situation relates to the respondents in **Romania**, who set the following hierarchy (in terms of both level of importance and level of possession): *ability to select content*, then *content processing and transmission capabilities* and *the ability to establish inter-, multi-, and trans-disciplinary connections*.

**Table no 7. Appreciation of the psycho-pedagogical teachers' competences in terms of importance and possession**

Importance			
Italy	Lithuania	Portugal	Romania
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. the ability to determine an optimal motivation of students,</li> <li>2. teaching skills specific to didactic communication,</li> <li>3. selecting and using appropriate teaching strategies,</li> <li>4. adapting to the age and individual peculiarities of the students,</li> <li>5. didactic creativity,</li> <li>6. pedagogical tact.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. pedagogical tact,</li> <li>2. selecting and using appropriate teaching strategies,</li> <li>3. the ability to formulate educational objectives,</li> <li>4. adapting to the age and individual peculiarities of the students.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. selecting and using appropriate teaching strategies,</li> <li>2. adapting to the age and individual peculiarities of the students,</li> <li>3. the ability to determine an optimal motivation of students,</li> <li>4. pedagogical tact.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. pedagogical tact</li> <li>2. didactic creativity</li> <li>3. teaching skills specific to didactic communication,</li> <li>4. competences related to didactic assessment,</li> <li>5. selecting and using appropriate teaching strategies.</li> </ol>
Possession			
Italy	Lithuania	Portugal	Romania
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. adapting to the age and individual peculiarities of the students,</li> <li>2. teaching skills specific to didactic communication,</li> <li>3. pedagogical tact.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. pedagogical tact,</li> <li>2. didactic creativity,</li> <li>3. selecting and using appropriate teaching strategies,</li> <li>4. the ability to formulate educational objectives.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. selecting and using appropriate teaching strategies,</li> <li>2. adapting to the age and individual peculiarities of the students,</li> <li>3. pedagogical tact.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. pedagogical tact,</li> <li>2. competences related to didactic assessment,</li> <li>3. selecting and using appropriate teaching strategies,</li> <li>4. teaching skills specific to didactic communication.</li> </ol>

By comparing the responses provided by the teachers in **Italy, Lithuania, Portugal** and **Romania**, with regard to *psycho-pedagogical competences*, we may conclude that the ones which they all consider important are related to *pedagogical tact* and *selecting and using appropriate teaching strategies*.

In reference to the extent to which the teachers appreciate that they possess certain psycho-pedagogical competences, *pedagogical tact* represents the competence to which all teachers in the four countries referred.

**Table no 8. Appreciation of the psycho-social teachers' competences in terms of importance and possession**

Importance			
Italy	Lithuania	Portugal	Romania
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. competence of active and empathic communication with students,</li> <li>2. equity in managing relationships with students,</li> <li>3. establishing the best educational relations with students.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. competences to communicate with parents,</li> <li>2. equity in managing relationships with students,</li> <li>3. competences to communicate with other colleagues.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. competence of active and empathic communication with students,</li> <li>2. establishing the best educational relations with students,</li> <li>3. equity in managing relationships with students.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. adaptability,</li> <li>2. providing formative feedback to all students,</li> <li>3. emotional competences,</li> <li>4. competence of active and empathic communication with students,</li> <li>5. equity in managing relationships with students.</li> </ol>
Possession			
Italy	Lithuania	Portugal	Romania
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. equity in managing relationships with students,</li> <li>2. competence of active and empathic communication with students,</li> <li>3. establishing the best educational relations with students.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. equity in managing relationships with students,</li> <li>2. competence of active and empathic communication with students,</li> <li>3. competences to communicate with parents,</li> <li>4. adaptability.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. equity in managing relationships with students,</li> <li>2. adaptability,</li> <li>3. competence of active and empathic communication with students,</li> <li>4. establishing the best educational relations with students,</li> <li>5. providing formative feedback to all students.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. equity in managing relationships with students,</li> <li>2. emotional competences,</li> <li>3. adaptability,</li> <li>4. providing formative feedback to all students.</li> </ol>

Comparing the answers given by the teachers from **Italy, Lithuania, Portugal** and **Romania**, regarding *psychosocial competences*, we can conclude that the competences they consider important and they place first are related to communication: *competence of active and empathic communication with students (Italy, Portugal and Romania)* and *competences to communicate with parents and other colleagues (Lithuania)*.

With regard to the extent to which teachers believe they have certain psychosocial competences, *equity in managing relationships with students* is the competence mentioned by teachers from all four countries and placed on the first position.



**Table no 9. Appreciation of the managerial teachers' competences in terms of importance and possession**

Importance			
Italy	Lithuania	Portugal	Romania
1. the ability to create an optimal learning environment, 2. capacities to manage educational crisis situations, 3. decision-making capacity.	1. capacities to manage educational crisis situations, 2. decision-making capacity, 3. organizing skills.	1. the ability to create an optimal learning environment, 2. decision-making capacity, 3. organizing skills, 4. capacities to manage educational crisis situations.	1. the ability to create an optimal learning environment, 2. planning skills, 3. organizing skills, 4. counseling skills.
Possession			
Italy	Lithuania	Portugal	Romania
1. decision-making capacity. 2. organizing skills 3. the ability to create an optimal learning environment.	1. decision-making capacity, 2. planning skills, 3. capacities to manage educational crisis situations.	1. decision-making capacity, 2. planning skills, 3. the ability to create an optimal learning environment.	1. planning skills, 2. organizing skills, 3. the ability to create an optimal learning environment.

Regarding *managerial competences*, analyzing the answers of teachers from the four countries, we can see that the teachers in **Italy, Portugal and Romania** especially value the ability to create an optimal learning environment, placing it first in the level of importance, while **Lithuanian** teachers place this competence on the last place. Broadly speaking, all respondents are also considered important the decision-making capacity and capacities to manage educational crisis situations.

Regarding the extent to which they possess these competences, respondents appreciate that the decision-making capacities (**Italian, Lithuanian and Portuguese** teachers) and planning skills (**Romanian** teachers) have been developed to a great extent.

### 3. Main causes of conflictual relations with students and resolute strategies used

#### a. Main causes of conflictual relations with students

When they were requested to evaluate on a 1 to 10 scale (1 – minimum level, 10 – maximum level), according to the level of importance, the frequent causes of conflicts between students and teachers, respondents of all four countries (**Italy, Lithuania, Portugal and Romania**) rank similar causes on first positions.

The possible responses are presented in the table below.

**Table no 10. Causes of conflicts between students and teachers**

1	different forms of discrimination (ethnic, social, religious, racial discrimination)
2	different kind of harassment
3	student marginalization during classroom activities
4	lack of respect for each student
5	damaging self-esteem of the student
6	school segregation
7	lack of confidence in student' potential
8	minimizing students' effort
9	ignoring the personal problems faced by each student
10	lack of empathy from teachers' part
11	lack of motivation from teachers' part
12	inconsistency in the optimal organization of the educational process
13	the absence of differentiated/individualized work strategies
14	not adapting learning task to students' age and individual psychological peculiarities
15	not adapting didactic process to the characteristics of the group of students/of each student
16	overdemand students
17	the absence of feedback provided by the teachers
18	lack of ability to create a supportive class climate
19	teachers' expectations on the ability of students
20	the laissez-faire didactic/managerial style of the teacher
21	students' lack of interest for didactic process
22	the "aggressive personality" of the student type structure
23	students' special problems (ADHD, autism, hyperkinesia, personality disorders etc.)
24	lack of discipline on the students' part
25	lack of students' motivation
26	deficient parenting educational practices
27	wrong parental patterns about the importance of the school
28	high level of well-being of the students' families

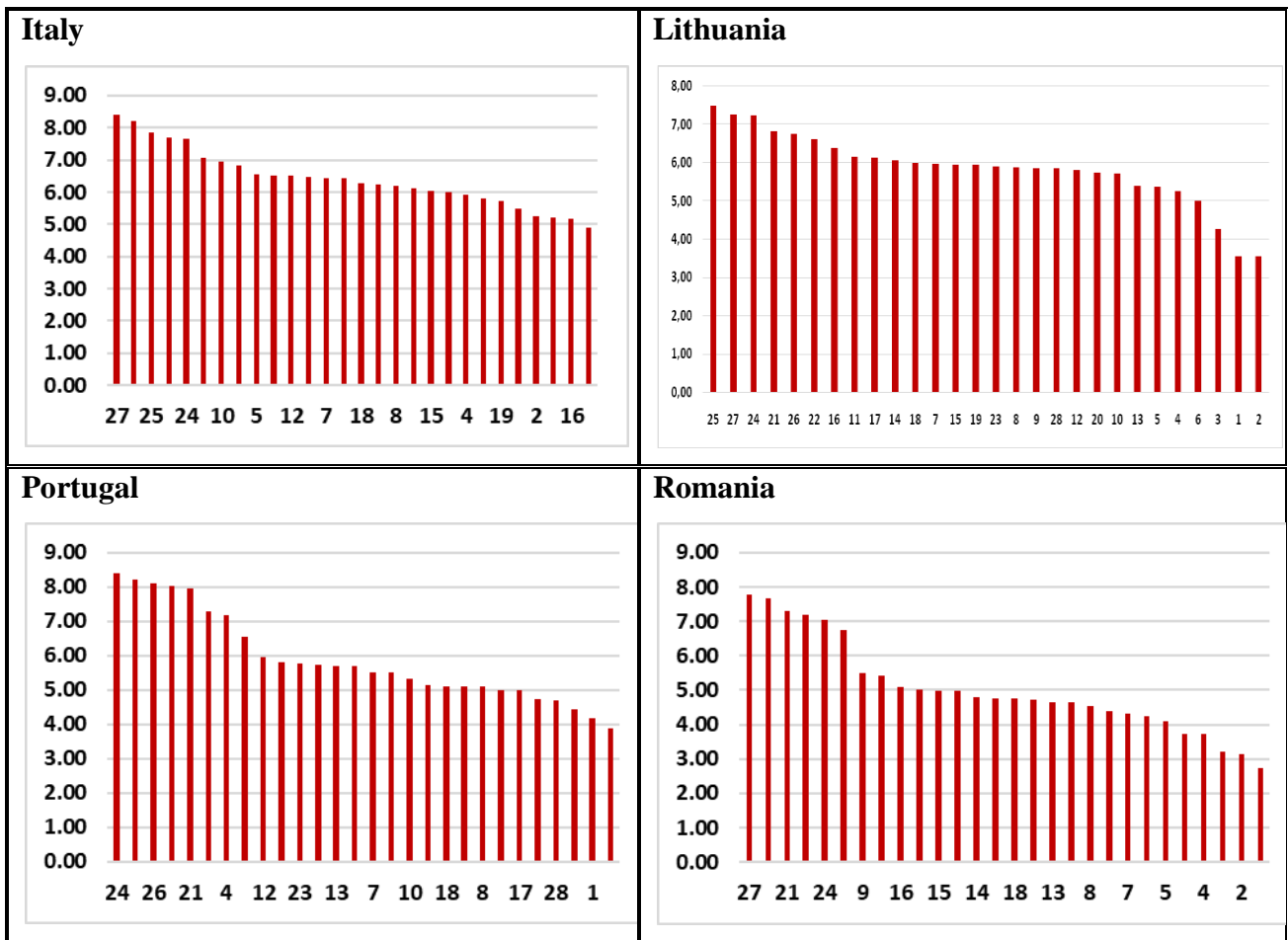


Figure no 2. Causes of conflicts between students and teachers

Therefore, based on the analysis of the results (Figure no 2), we note the following aspects: in **Italy** and **Romania**, the first two positions are represented by *wrong parental patterns about the importance of the school* and *deficient parenting educational practices*. The last of the causes, respectively *deficient parenting educational practices*, is identified as a common cause in **Lithuania** and **Portugal**. In these two countries and in **Italy**, the first position is represented by another cause: *lack of discipline on the students' part*, while in the opinion of the **Romanian** respondents another importance cause is *the lack of students' interest for the didactic process*. The figures above show that all four countries indicate the same main causes (first 6), with a relatively similar importance: family-school relation, distorted image of parents in relation to the role of school, as well as the deficient manner in which they understand to educate their own children. The distribution of the responses indicates that the teachers attach low importance to factors associated with their own educational practices. These choices demonstrate that, in the opinion of the teachers questioned, the causes of conflicts between them and their students are of external nature, do not concern them directly and are determined by factors pertaining, in particular, to family environment.

### **b. Appreciation of the strategies for solving the conflicts between teachers and students**

At another item of the questionnaire the teachers were requested to evaluate, on a 1 to 5 scale, various strategies which may be exploited to solve conflicts between teachers and students.

The possible responses on this item are presented in the table below.

**Table no 11. Strategies for solving the conflicts between teachers and students**

1	compliance with the principles of uniqueness and dignity of each person
2	equal opportunities
3	non-discrimination
4	valorization of each student
5	didactic process adapted to the specific of the learning group / student
6	clarifying the steps of learning activity
7	negotiating the rules of the classroom
8	equitable distribution of the learning task
9	active communication with parents
10	providing feedback
11	democratic managerial style
12	school consultations
13	the use of attractive teaching materials
14	active and emphatic listening
15	teacher' counseling by other specialists
16	self-determination of the teacher to solve students' problems
17	developing conflicts negotiation teachers' ability
18	using a assessment method based also on the students involvement (i.e. self-assessment)



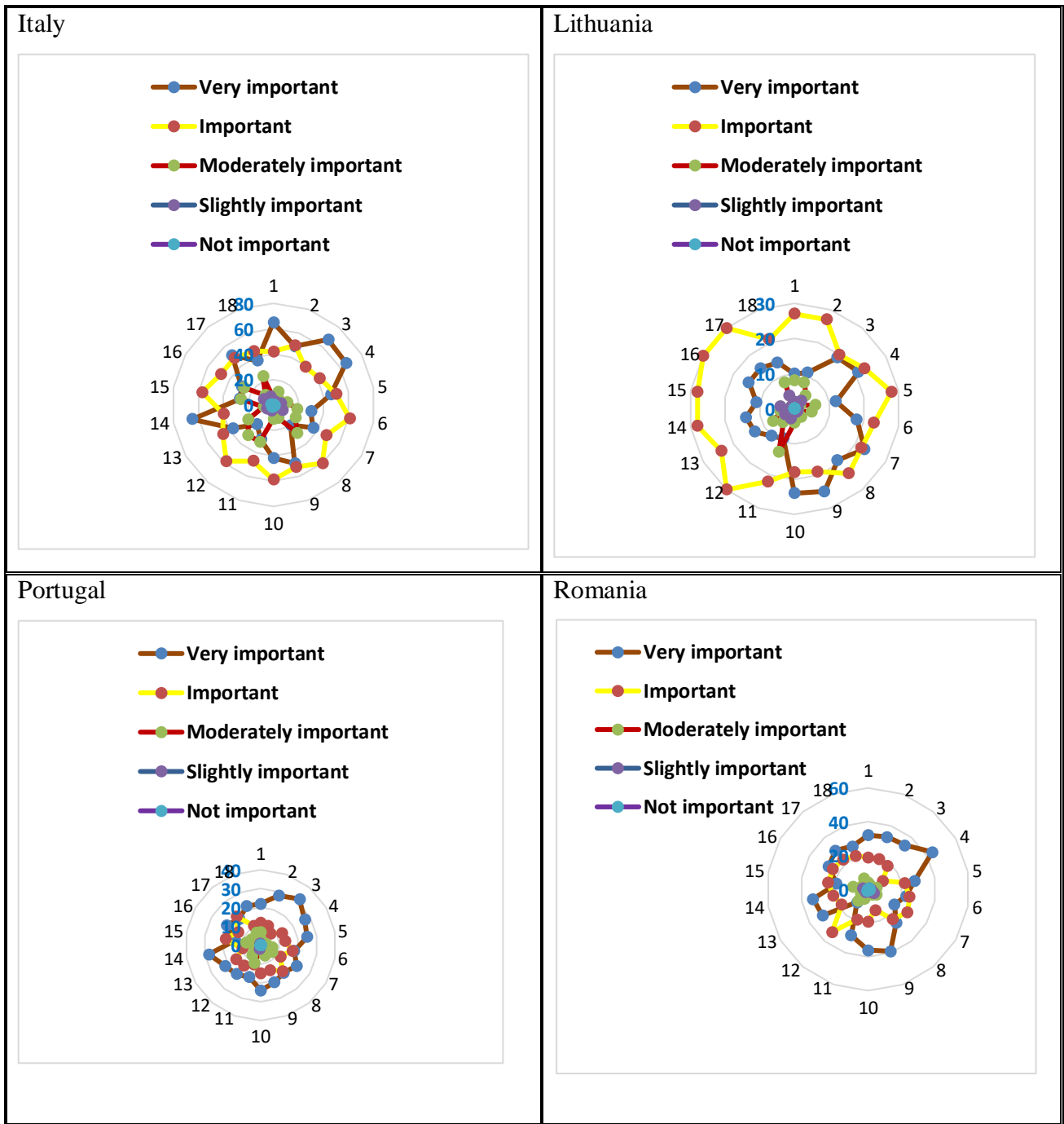


Figure no 3. Appreciation of the strategies for solving the conflicts between teachers and students

**Legend (FOR TRANSLATION):**

	Very important
	Important
	Moderately important
	Slightly important
	Not important

Therefore, based on the analysis of the figures above, we note the following aspects:

The teachers in **Italy** consider that the following strategies are very important: *non-discrimination, valorization of each student, compliance with the principles of uniqueness and dignity of each person and active and empathic listening*. In addition, the questioned teachers consider important the *clarifying the steps of learning activity* and also *equitable distribution of the learning tasks*.

The teachers in **Lithuania** appreciated as important the following: *active communication with parents, providing feedback and negotiating the rules of the classroom*. These were closely followed by strategies such as: *valorization of each student, equitable distribution of the learning tasks and non-discrimination*. It is interesting to see that the teachers in Lithuania are aware of the importance of their own communication and managerial competences in solving conflicts with students; however, they do not disregard the decisive role they play in facilitating the learning process, attaching therefore value to the psycho-pedagogical competences.

In reference to strategies used in solving conflicts between teachers and students, the teachers from **Portugal** appreciate the following as very important: *non-discrimination, equal chances and active and empathic listening*. Moreover, the respondents appreciate that *development of the teacher's ability to negotiate toward solving the conflict, teachers' counseling by other specialists* and also *equitable distribution of the learning tasks are important in the process of solving conflicts between teachers and students*.

The teachers in **Romania** appreciate that the following are very important: strategies laying emphasis on *valorization of each student, active communication with parents and providing feedback*. We see that it is mostly about strategies involving optimization of communication between the main educational actors (teachers, students, parents), intended to prevent and solve conflicts in an effective manner.

#### 4. Challenges in daily work with students

Another item of the questionnaire presented issues/ situations that can be considered challenges in activity with students and asked the teachers to appreciate, on a 1 to 10 scale, the level of importance of those situations.

The respondents in **Italy** and **Portugal** rank first *effective management of the discipline problems*, where as the ones in Lithuania rank first *stimulating motivation and students' interest for learning* and the ones in **Romania** *effective communication, according to students possibilities*. The respondents in **Italy** ranked on the following positions *capturing and retaining students' attention* and *stimulating motivation for students' learning*. The ones in **Portugal** mentioned *effective management of the behavioral disorders* and *optimal management of educational (micro) crisis situations*. For the

teachers in **Lithuania**, *effective management of discipline problems* and *capturing and retaining students' attention* are important, where as for teachers in **Romania** *psycho-pedagogical knowledge of students* and *effective management of the behavioral disorders*.

At the same item, the last positions were represented by the following aspects: *psycho-pedagogical knowledge of students* and *training / developing competences appropriate to the age and to the level of schooling* (**Italy**), *differentiating / individualizing of the training* (**Portugal**), *differentiating / individualizing of the training* and *training / developing competences appropriate to the age and to the level of schooling* (**Lithuania**) and respectively *capturing and retaining students' attention* (**Romania**).

As a consequence, following analysis of the registered responses, we observe that the questioned teachers face up to a series of difficulties in their activity with students, which are generated either by teachers' insufficient/deficient psycho-pedagogical training for the area of the subjects *Education psychology/School psychology/Human development psychology* and *Class management* or by their insufficient/deficient methodological training, in relatively equal percentages.

In terms of differences, we see that the teachers in **Romania** ranked first *psycho-pedagogical knowledge of students* in the category of aspects/situations which may be considered challenges in the activity with students, whereas teachers in Italy ranked the same on the last position.

## 5. Representations/ beliefs of the factors which can increase student commitment and student motivation

Another item of the questionnaire asked teachers to appreciate the extent to which some representations / beliefs of school managers / teachers / students themselves (which were listed, in a dichotomic manner: positive factors, negative factors) influence the motivation and involvement of students in the educational process, in the direction of their increase / decrease (evaluation scale: 1 to 10 → 1 - minimum level of importance, 10 - maximum level of importance).

**Table no 12. Representations / beliefs of school managers that influence the motivation and involvement of students in the educational process - Positive factors category**

Italy	Lithuania	Portugal	Romania
1. good, effective, competent teacher 2. confidence in the student' s potential 3. tolerance, respect for otherness	1.CPD valorization 2. „good student” 3. good school and confidence in the student' s potential	1. good, effective, competent teacher 2. tolerance, respect for otherness 3 confidence in the student' s potential and equal opportunities	1. good, effective, competent teacher 2.confidence in the student' s potential 3. equal opportunities

In the category of positive factors, we may find a multitude of similarities which, in the respondents' opinion, relate to the competence profile of the "good teacher", who is confident in the potential of each student.

**Table no 13. Representations / beliefs of school managers that influence the motivation and involvement of students in the educational process - Negative factors category**

Italy	Lithuania	Portugal	Romania
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. devaluation of the teaching profession</li> <li>2. bullying, aggression, school violence</li> <li>3. lack of confidence in the student's potential</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. management</li> <li>2. devaluation of the teaching profession</li> <li>3. lack of confidence in the power of educational system</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. management</li> <li>2. poor school</li> <li>3. lack of confidence in the power of education</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. management</li> <li>2. competition between students/student classes</li> <li>3. absenteeism</li> </ol>

We can observe that in the category of negative factors, the defective management at school level entails early school leaving.

**Table no 14. Representations / beliefs of teachers that influence the motivation and involvement of students in the educational process - Positive factors category**

Italy	Lithuania	Portugal	Romania
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. good, effective, competent teacher</li> <li>2. student-centered educational process</li> <li>3. positive feedback</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. school success</li> <li>2. confidence in the student's potential</li> <li>3. CPD valorization and „good student”</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. good, effective, competent teacher</li> <li>2. confidence in the student's potential</li> <li>3. tolerance, respect for otherness</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. good, effective, competent teacher</li> <li>2. authentic, efficient, sustainable learning</li> <li>3. participation to the educational process</li> </ol>

According to the respondents, the quality of the didactic act influences motivation in a positive manner, in relation to school participation and learning. This is the reason why the respondents appreciate that the "good" teacher is the guarantor of school success, the teacher who, in their opinion, plays the roles of facilitator, coach, trainer, is competent and provides feedback.

**Table no 15. Representations / beliefs of teachers that influence the motivation and involvement of students in the educational process - Negative factors category**

Italy	Lithuania	Portugal	Romania
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. devaluation of the teaching profession</li> <li>2. teacher - knowledge transmitter</li> <li>3. lack of confidence in the power of education</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. management</li> <li>2. learning - process of assimilation of information</li> <li>3. teacher - knowledge transmitter</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. management</li> <li>2. lack of confidence in the power of education</li> <li>3. lack of confidence in the power of educational system</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. management</li> <li>2. competition between students/student classes</li> <li>3. valorizing cognitive intelligence (academic)</li> </ol>

In the category of negative factors, at the intersection of respondents' opinions, one may find aspects deriving from the category of defective organizational management and distorted perceptions on teaching-learning process.

**Table no 16. Representations / beliefs of students that influence the motivation and involvement of students in the educational process - Positive factors category**

Italy	Lithuania	Portugal	Romania
1. good, effective, competent teacher 2. school success 3. teacher - facilitator, guide, coach, trainer	1. school - friendly environment 2. valorizing multiple intelligences 3. teacher - facilitator, guide, coach, trainer	1. school - friendly environment 2. good, effective, competent teacher 3. tolerance, respect for otherness	1. good, effective, competent teacher 2. teacher - facilitator, guide, coach, trainer 3. suitable/able for school

In the respondents' opinion, the factors which would positively influence students, relate to aspects regarding school environment and school organizational climate, which they describe as a friendly environment, where good teachers play several roles simultaneously: guide, facilitator, trainer.

**Table no 17. Representations / beliefs of students that influence the motivation and involvement of students in the educational process - Negative factors category**

Italy	Lithuania	Portugal	Romania
1. lack of confidence in the power of education 2. lack of confidence in the power of educational system 3. devaluation of the teaching profession	1. teacher - knowledge transmitter 2. valorizing cognitive intelligence (academic) 3. school failure	1. teacher - knowledge transmitter 2. valorizing cognitive intelligence (academic) 3. competition between students/student classes 4. devaluation of the teaching profession	1. teacher - knowledge transmitter 2. authority in the classroom management 3. valorizing cognitive intelligence (academic)

In the category of negative factors, in case of all countries partners to the project, we may see that the distorted perception on teacher` roles and the valorization, often exclusively, of the cognitive intelligence of the students, alters the participation to school activities.

## 6. School strategies to prevent ESL

The teachers were requested to evaluate, according to the level of importance, on a 1 to 5 scale (1 – minim level of importance, 5 – maximum level of importance), a series of strategies to prevent ESL (early school leaving). The comparative analysis indicates some aspects which will be mention below. The respondents in **Italy** have granted the highest scores to the following strategies: *development of a school-family partnership, activities with parents (a better collaboration between school and parents),*

*placing each student in school success situations and socio-educational assistance for cases at risk.* The teachers in **Lithuania** also appreciate that the strategies to prevent ESL should start with *placing each student in school success situations*, closely followed by *activities with parents and school counseling and guidance activities*. The teachers in **Portugal** appreciate that *operation of multidisciplinary teams at school level* is considered to be the most effective strategy, closely followed by strategies aiming to *develop school-family partnerships and socio-educational assistance for cases at risk*. The respondents in **Romania** attach the highest importance to strategies involving *socio-educational assistance for cases at risk*, closely followed by *adoption of measures/solving conflicts between students, school counseling and guidance activities and activities with parents* (high interest for the students' learning process). In terms of common points, all four countries value the family-school relation as a potential factor in preventing ESL situations.

The lowest scores in **Italy** are granted to *anti-segregational measures and programs of after school type*; in **Lithuania**, the last position in the hierarchy of the strategies to prevent ESL is represented by *the assessment of dropout/ESL risk*; in **Portugal**, the last position as measure to prevent ESL is the *social support (material and financial support/scholarships, stationary, computers, everyday sandwich box, milk and croissant program, school uniforms)* granted to students, whereas in **Romania** the last position in the choices made by the respondents are the *anti-segregational measures*.

In relation to this distribution of responses, we may conclude that the teachers questioned consider that the best strategies to prevent ESL involve a suitable collaboration between the two fundamental educational environments for the development of the child's personality – school and family.

## **7. Teaching methods used to prevent the school disengagement**

Another item asked teachers to mention teaching methods that can prevent school disengagement and associated behaviors. Respondents have referred to the following categories, listed by the frequency of responses, in descending order.

**Table no 18. Teaching methods that can be used to prevent school disengagement and associated behaviors**

Italy	Lithuania	Portugal	Romania
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• action-based methods;</li> <li>• methods and techniques for exploring reality;</li> <li>• methods and techniques of personal development;</li> <li>• methods of oral communication;</li> <li>• methods and techniques based on the use of ICT;</li> <li>• methods and techniques specific to non-formal education;</li> <li>• methods of communication based on internal language.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• active-participative methods;</li> <li>• problems solving methods;</li> <li>• efficient active communication-based didactic methods;</li> <li>• group work methods.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• personal development methods and techniques;</li> <li>• methods and techniques of teaching differentiation/individualisation;</li> <li>• interactive group learning/cooperation methods;</li> <li>• collaboration methods based on using modern techniques;</li> <li>• non-formal education methods and techniques;</li> <li>• reality exploration methods and techniques;</li> <li>• methods to stimulate students' creativity;</li> <li>• oral communication methods;</li> <li>• action-based methods.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• computer-assisted methods;</li> <li>• games as teaching methods;</li> <li>• differentiated/individualized training methods;</li> <li>• competition-based methods;</li> <li>• mixed learning methods;</li> <li>• learning methods/concatenation of learning experiences;</li> <li>• explanation;</li> <li>• exercise;</li> <li>• modeling;</li> <li>• experiment;</li> <li>• case study;</li> <li>• simulation;</li> <li>• atypical working methods, which involve assuming by student the role of teacher in creating some teaching materials or leading some training sequences and use of music, drawing and acting as learning methods.</li> </ul>

As shown by the comparative analysis of the responses, the teachers in all four countries mention a series of methods which they consider efficient in preventing the phenomenon of school disengagement. Some respondents exemplify such methods, other refer to categories of methods.

A series of *common aspects* may be identified:

- methods mentioned by respondents in all countries: *communication methods* (in particular, the oral communication methods), *action-based methods* and *methods which explore reality*;
- in three out of four countries, the teachers questioned mention *ICT-based methods*.

Additionally, starting from the data included in tables, we may also see some *differences*:

- the respondents in **Italy** and **Portugal** mention *personal development methods and techniques* and *non-formal education-specific methods and techniques*;

- the **Lithuanian** and **Portuguese** teachers mention *group working methods/learning by cooperation*, whereas Romanian teachers enumerate *competition-based methods*;
- the teachers in **Romania** also mention the working methods involving assuming by student the role of teacher in creating some teaching materials or leading some training sequences (*flipped classroom*).

## 4.2 Results from questionnaire addressed to students

The questionnaire addressed to students aim to:

- listen to students' voice about their school experiences and perspectives;
- increase knowledge on (their) reasoning processes for deciding to leave school and/or to have negative behaviors (push and pull factors).

**Profile of students and ESLs from the target group:** Each partner country (Italy, Romania, Portugal, Lithuania) administered the questionnaire to a group of at least 120 students in middle and upper school and young ESL or NEET. The questionnaire was completed by 917 students (from first and second year of Upper school and from last year of Middle school) and 58 ESLs.

**Data analysis method:** The results obtained were subjected to quantitative and qualitative analysis.

**Findings:** We present below some relevant results registered as a result of filling in the questionnaire provided to students, by the respondents in the four countries partners.

### 1. The thought about leaving school

One of the items asked *students who have thought about leaving school* to answer to an important question: *Why have you thought to leave the school?* Students (who thought about leaving school) were asked to attribute a level of importance (on a Likert scale from 1 to 10, where 10 = very important to me; 1 = not important to me) on array reasons (taken from the scientific literature). In the table below, we present the responses of this category of students:



**Table no 19. The reasons students thought to leave the school  
(opinions of students who have thought about leaving school)**

Country	Most important reasons (average value)	Least important reasons (average value)
Italy	I want to go to work (6.8) I do not get along with the teachers (5.0) I think the assessment of my school results is not fair (4.9)	I am being bullied (2.0) I want to live in other country with my parents (3.5)
Lithuania	I want to go to work (6.6); The school subjects are not important to what I want to do (6.4); The teaching methods and tools of my teachers are not very engaging (6.3)	I am being bullied (5.0); I think school is an useless institution(5.1); I have been failed (5.3).
Portugal	I want to go to work (6.5) I expected to study different school subjects than I'm now studying (5.2) The school subjects are not important to what I want to do and The teaching methods and tools of my teachers are not very engaging (4.9)	I am being bullied (2.6) I think my teachers don't support me in the learning activity (3.6)
Romania	I think my teachers don't support me in the learning activity (6.1) I want to live in other country with my parents (5.7) The school subjects are not important to what I want to do and I expected to study different school subjects than I'm now studying.(5.1)	I think school is an useless institution. (2.5) I have been failed (2.6)

In **Italy**, for both groups of students (middle school students and upper school students), the most important motivation is *the desire to go to work* (an average value of 6.6 middle school students; 7.0 upper school students).

Among the students of upper school, the other two most important reasons are *the low academic performance (I have bad grades)* and *low interest in school subjects (I believe that school subjects are not interesting)*. Among the middle school students, the second and third most important motivation are *"I think the assessment of my school results is not fair"* and *"I do not get along with the teachers"*. For **Lithuania**, the most important push factors are: *the willingness to go to work* (6,6 average value); the perception that *school subjects are not important compared to what students want to do* (6,4 average value); the idea that *teaching methods / tools used are not very engaging for students* (6,3 average value).

Students from **Portugal** shows that the push factors that are most important are: *the willingness to go to work; the expectation of studying different school subjects; teaching methods / tools not very engaging; low interest in school subjects.*

In **Romania**, the most important push factors are:

a. *Upper school students opinions - willingness to go to work; lack of importance of the school subjects compared to what one wants to do; perception of not appreciation with respect to the efforts made; teaching methods and tools not very engaging; school subjects not interesting.*

It is therefore noted that 3 of the 5 main push factors are closely linked to *teaching practices* and *relational aspects* (in terms of teaching methods not aligned with the learning styles of the students, low ability of the school subjects taught to involve the students, feeling of not recognition of efforts from part of the teachers).

b. *Middle school students opinions - lack of support from teachers in learning activities; lack of feel of belonging to the school; willingness to follow parents in another country.*

Beyond the desire to work, common to most of the students who thought of leaving school (except for students in Romania), we notice another common note (except for those from Italy, this time), namely their perception regarding the curriculum that is not relevant to what they would like to do, which inevitably generates *lack of motivation for learning*.

### **1. Opinions about the potential reasons/causes why students leave school (from students who have never thought about doing it)**

Another item of the questionnaire request from *students who have never thought of leaving school* to specify the reasons that lead to early school leaving, in their opinions (Table no 20).

**Table no 20. The reasons that lead to early school leaving (opinions of students who never thought of leaving school)**

Country	Most important reasons (average value)	Least important reasons (average value)
<b>Italy</b>	School failure (6.7) Bullying (6.6) Desire/coercion to work (6.0)	Uselessness of school as institution (4.4) Lack of sense of belonging to school (4.9)
<b>Lithuania</b>	Suspension due to bad behaviour (7.4) Learning difficulties and Health/economic/family problems (both 7.3) Inability to get good school results and School failure (both 7.2).	Uselessness of school as institution (5.7) Lack of sense of belonging to school (5.9)
<b>Portugal</b>	Bullying (6.5) Lack of interest in school subjects (6.5) Learning difficulties and School failure (both 6.3)	Lack of sense of belonging to school (5.1) Difficult relationship with teachers (5.2)
<b>Romania</b>	Lack of interest in school subjects (6.5) School failure and Health / economic/ family problems (6.4) Learning difficulties (6.2)	Uselessness of school as institution . (4.9) Lack of sense of belongig to school (5.2)

In **Italy**, among the most important possible causes were indicated: *school failure* (upper school students indicated this as the most important reason); *bullying* (indicated as the first cause by middle school students), where as, as we have seen above, it is considered the least important cause by those who have thought about leaving school; *desire/coercion to work* (especially according to upper school students).

The students from **Lithuania** have mentioned among the most four important motivations according to them: *suspension due to bad behaviour* (7.4 average value); *learning difficulties and health / economic / family problems* (both 7.3 average values); *inability to get good school results and school failure* (both 7.2 average values).

The students from **Portugal** have indicated the following factors: *bullying* (6.5 average value), in the opposite way to what expressed from the students which have thought about leaving school (which considered the “bullying” the reason less important); *lack of interest in school subjects* (6.5 average value); *learning difficulties and school failure* (both 6.3 average values).

In **Romania**, the questioned students who have ever thought about leaving school have indicated among the most important four representations about the motivations that push young people to leave

school without a secondary qualification: *lack of interest in school subjects* (6.5 average value); *school failure and health / economic/ family problems* (both 6.4 average values); *learning difficulties* (6.2 average value).

## 2. Teaching methods used and their importance for engaging students. Factors for improving school results. Dimensions related to the school well-being

Another item asked students to say how much they are agree with some statements, based on their school experience.

The statements were grouped into four categories, which are focused on the following dimensions: *teaching methods used and their importance for engaging students, factors for improving school results, dimensions related to the school well-being.*

The statements are presented below:

**Didactic design:** which concerns the didactic planning and the learning process, the teaching methods and tools used and their congruence with learning styles and students' needs (N.9 items): *I feel involved in the choice of the activities/tasks to be carried out; I feel I can choose and decide in my learning process; My teachers use various teaching methods and tools; My teachers encourage me to express my point of view/ideas regarding the activities to be carried out; My teachers use the most suitable teaching method for me; My experiences, knowledge, skills, gained outside the school are taken into consideration by my teachers.; My teachers adapt teaching on the basis of my needs and interests; My opinions and ideas are taken into account by teachers when they are teaching or during the lesson; My learning experience is stimulating and attractive*

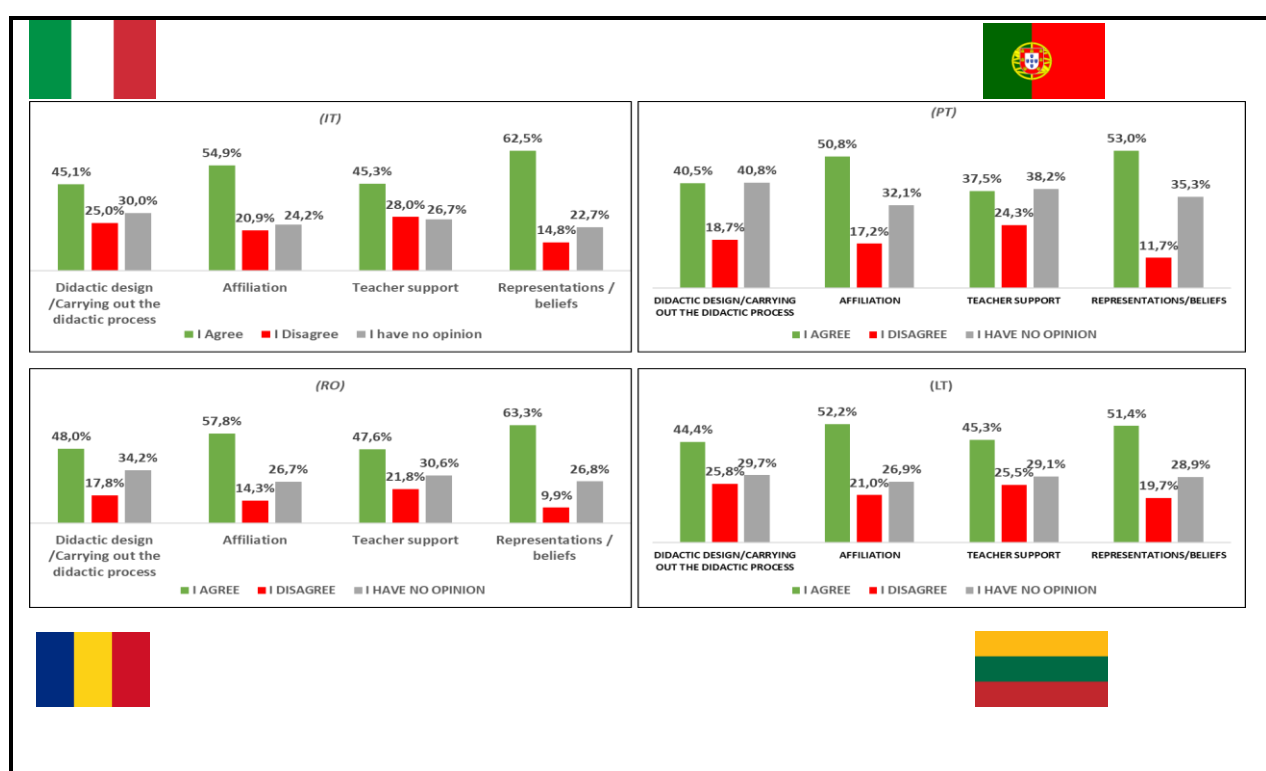
**Affiliation:** referred to the sense of belonging to the school and to class climate (N.7 items): *School activities help me make me feel part of the school; Teachers make me feel like I belong to the school; I know my classmates very well; My classmates know me very well; My classmates make me feel part of the school; With classmates we work well together and help each other in the performance of our tasks; The grades at school are assigned in a fair and impartial manner in my class.*

**Teacher support:** as a quality of the relationship with teachers both from an educational and socio-emotional point of view (N.10 items): *My teachers make me feel welcome in the classroom; My teachers encourage the equal participation of everyone in the classroom; I feel respected by my teachers; I have a good relationship with my teachers; I feel little appreciated by my teachers; I get the help that I need from the teachers; My teachers believe that I have ideas to make a contribution to the class work; I often dialogue with my teachers on school-related issues; I often dialogue with my*

teachers on issues which do not concern the school(my interests, my friendships, my expectations, my future projects, etc.); My teachers are also concerned about what I feel.

**Beliefs:** students’ opinions about the expectations of parents, classmates, teachers, towards them (N.5 items): My teachers have high expectations for me; My teachers have confidence in my potential; My teachers believe that each student is able to achieve school success; My classmates believe that I can get good results; My parents expect me to get good grades.

The scale used for this item was a 1 to 5 scale, where 1 – strongly do not agree and 5 – strongly agree. To make more easily the analysis of data, we narrowed the scale to only three steps: I agree – green; I have no opinion – grey; I disagree – red, as we can see in the Figure no 4.



**Figure no 4. The responses of the students at the four categories of statements**

In **Italy**, the highest level of agreement concerns *the dimensions relating to the representations of (positive) expectations of teachers / parents / other students, and the sense of belonging to the school*; on the other hand, and also in line with the results of the surveys in the other countries of the ACCESS project, those with the highest level of disagreement concern *the didactic dimension and the support received from the teacher*.

For **Lithuania**, the dimension in which the highest level of agreement of the students is recorded concerns *the affiliation (52,2%)*, that is *the sense of belonging to the school*; the second dimension

with the highest level of agreement is *the perception about the expectations of competence that the other members of the school community (teachers, parents, classmates) have towards them* (51,4%). In **Portugal**, the highest level of agreement was registered on *the perception about the expectations of competence that the other members of the scholastic community (teachers, parents, classmates) have towards them* (53,03%); the second dimension with the highest level of agreement is *the affiliation* (50,76%). On the contrary, with regard to *the support received by the teacher and to the teaching activities*, the lowest agreement levels are recorded (37,46%; 40,48%).

The dimensions on which, in general, the questioned students from **Romania** express the highest level of agreement concerns *the belief that others have a good expectation of competence towards them* (63,3% representation/beliefs) and *affiliation* (57,8%). While *the dimensions concerning the teacher's support and the learning process* record the lowest average values (level of agreement, respectively, of 47,6% and 48,0%)

One item of the questionnaire focused on aspects that would help student to have a *good motivation for learning* and to obtain *better school results*.

The students from all countries (**Italy, Lithuania, Portugal and Romania**) consider that their school results depends, mainly, *on teaching methods, which should be more focused on students*.

Another important aspect for school performance and improvement of unsatisfactory school results, mentioned by students from three of the countries (**Italy, Lithuania and Portugal**) is *having practical lesson*. Students from **Italy** and **Romania** also mention *to have help from classmates*. There are more important aspects in obtaining better school result, mentioned by the students from **Romania**: *to be involved in the choosing of learning objectives and learning methods; to set the best ways for student in order to learn and to have family support*.

Asked to identify aspects that may contribute to their well-being at school, the surveyed students provided the following answers:

In **Italy**: a) among upper school students, *“To be involved in the choice about how to face conflicts/problems with classmates and teachers”* (29,1%) and *“To fell understood by teachers on problems/difficulties related to the school environment ”*(21,5%); b) among middle school students, we have the opposite situation because the two most chosen are: *“To receive support from classmates”* (31,3%) and *“To fell understood by teachers on problems/difficulties related to the school environment”* (22,2%).

In **Lithuania**, the students' options were the following: *“To have support from family”* (23,6%) and *“To be involved in the choice about how to face conflicts/problems with classmates and teachers”* (21,3%).

The students' first two choices from **Portugal**, were: a) among upper school students, “*To feel understood by teachers on problems/difficulties related to the school environment*” (31,1%) and “*To have good grades at school*” (23,0%); b) among middle school students, we have the opposite situation because the two most chosen option refer to family’s and classmates’ support - “*To have a support from family*” (34,1%) and “*To receive support from classmates*” (32,5%).

In **Romania**, the first choice, for both groups and mainly for upper school students, is “*To feel understood by teachers on problems/difficulties related to life outside the school*”. It is a relational aspect, between student and teacher, related to the: 1) emotional dimension (to feel understood), not just of interaction; 2) extra-scholastic dimension, concerning problems linked not only to status of "student". Among upper school students, this dimension is by far the most important one (for example: compared to the second option reported by the same group “*To get involved in choosing how to deal with conflicts/problems with classmates and teachers*” -25.8%, there are over +15 percentage points). The second and the third aspects listed are: a) for upper school students, “*To get involved in choosing how to deal with conflicts/problems with classmates and teachers*” (25.8%), and “*To receive support from classmates*” (21,9%); b) for middle school students, “*To have support from family*” (25% frequency) and “*To receive support from classmates*” (21,9 % frequency).

Analyzing the answers provided by students from partner countries, we can appreciate that one of their fundamental needs, unfulfilled in the school environment, is to have their "voice" heard, both in situations related to issues specific to this space, and in terms of aspects related to personal life (Romania). In other words, their need to develop an authentic and effective communication relationship with teachers and other colleagues is highlighted. Being not involved in relevant communication contexts, they are practically deprived of the opportunity to practice and develop their communication skills and more. Only in a communicational process in which the roles are interchangeable, and the students can assume at any time the role of transmitter, they have the chance to form the qualities of a good communicator.

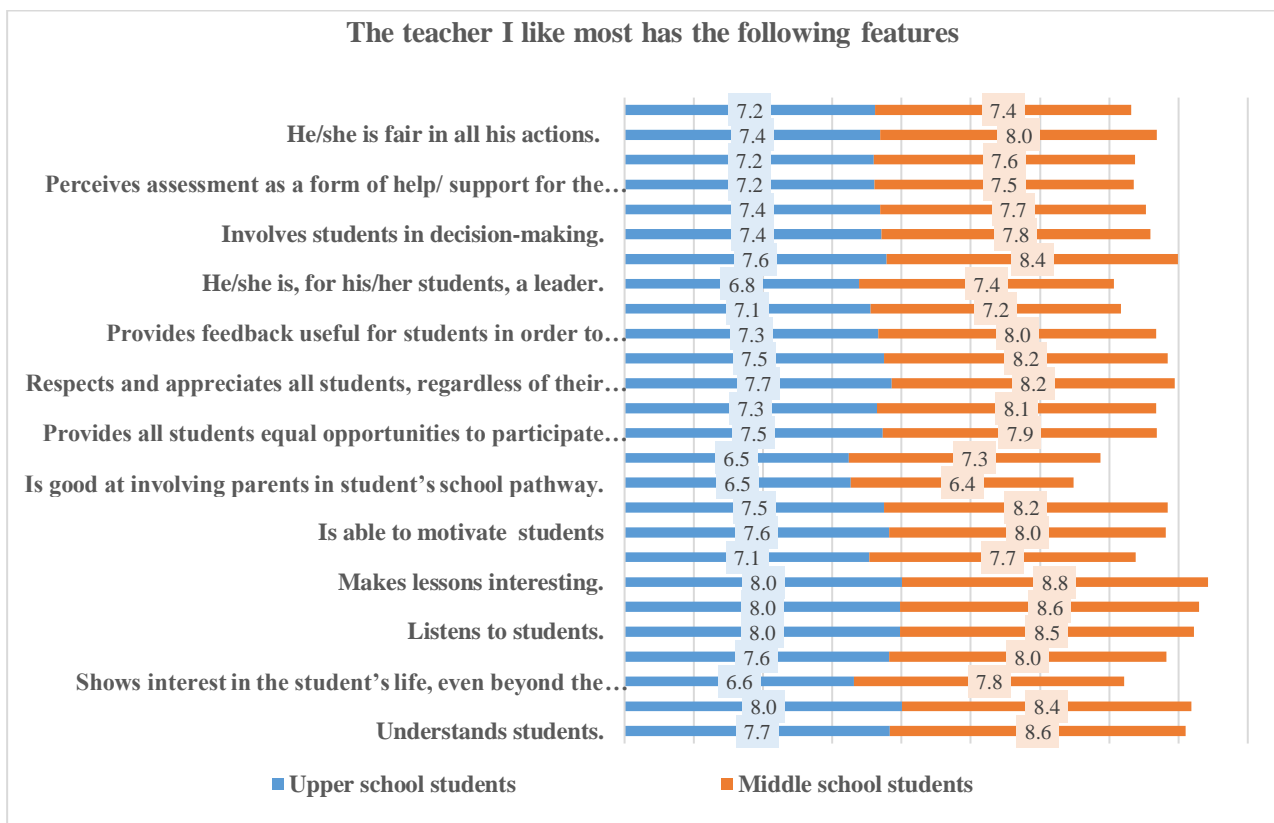
Another item which cover two important dimensions: factors for improving school results and dimensions related to the school well-being is the item related to *features of the teacher that students like most*. So, this item from the questionnaire addressed to students asked them to establish the level of importance (from 1 to 10) of some features of the teachers they like most. We present, in the following, the responses obtained in each country.

In **Italy**, according to Figure no 5, the levels of importance attributed from the students to the *features of the teacher that they like most* are connected with *the ability to make lessons interesting* (8.4 average

value), *to assess fairly* (8.3 average value), *to understand student and to respect him/her* (8.2 average values).

For both groups of students (upper school students and middle school students), the least important features of the teacher that they like is *his/her capacity to involve parents in student's school pathway* (6.5 average score).

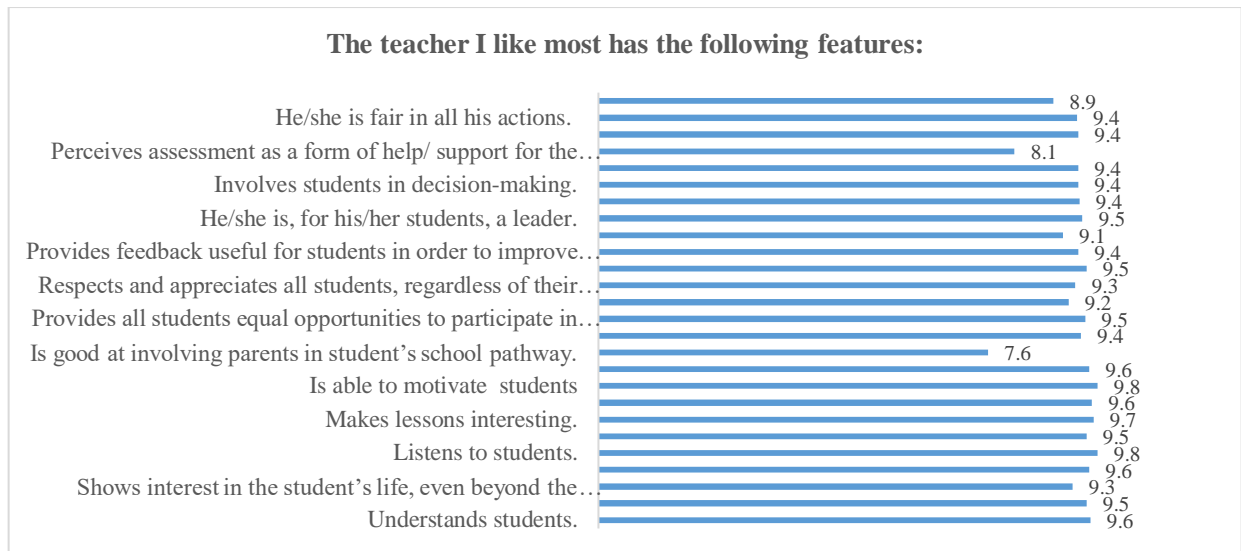
According to the upper school students, *teacher's ability to link the lessons to other school subjects* is among features less important (6.9 average score). This datum contrasts with the data of other researches addressed to students in which the teacher's ability to move towards other disciplinary sectors is indicated among the main "levers" to develop students' interest and motivation. Middle school students have also indicated *the predisposition of the teacher to learn with her students* among the less important characteristics, even if with an average value not very low (7.2 average score).



**Figure no 5. The features of the teachers students like most (Italy)**

In **Lithuania**, the answers about *the features of the teacher who most like*, do not show particularly meaningful aspects because all the features listed have recorded very high average scores, with the exception of *the capacity to involve the family* (Figure no 6).

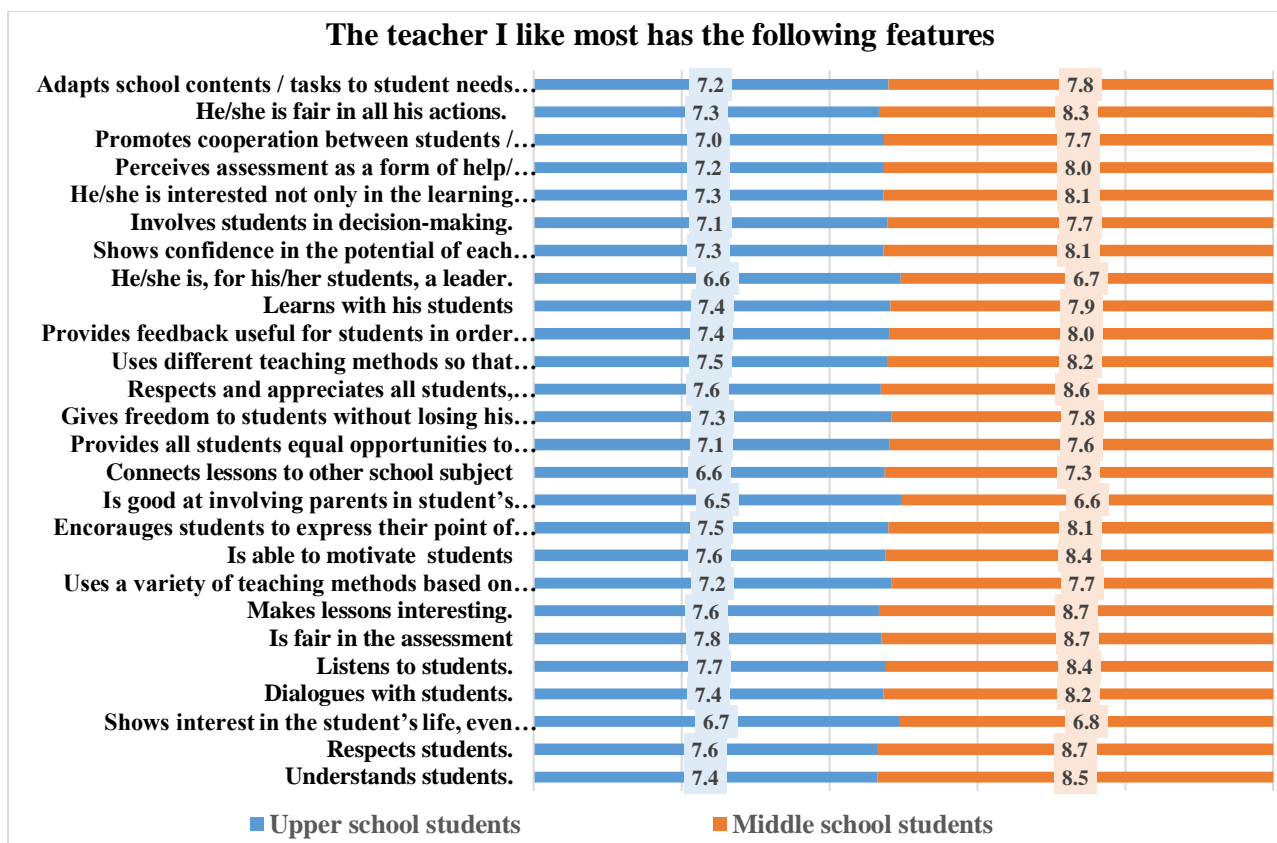




**Figure no 6. The features of the teachers that students like most (Lithuania)**

In **Portugal**, the levels of importance (from 1 to 10) attributed from the students to the features of the teacher that they like most are connected with *the ability to assess fairly* (8.2 average value), *to listen to the student and to respect him/her*, even regardless of his/her academic skills/results, and *take interesting lessons* (8.1 average values).

The features of the teacher that are less important for middle school students are: 1) *the involvement of parents in the students' school paths*, although middle school students have indicated family support as a way that would help them to do better academically; 2) *personal qualities of the teacher as leadership*; 3) *the teacher's interest in the life of the student*.



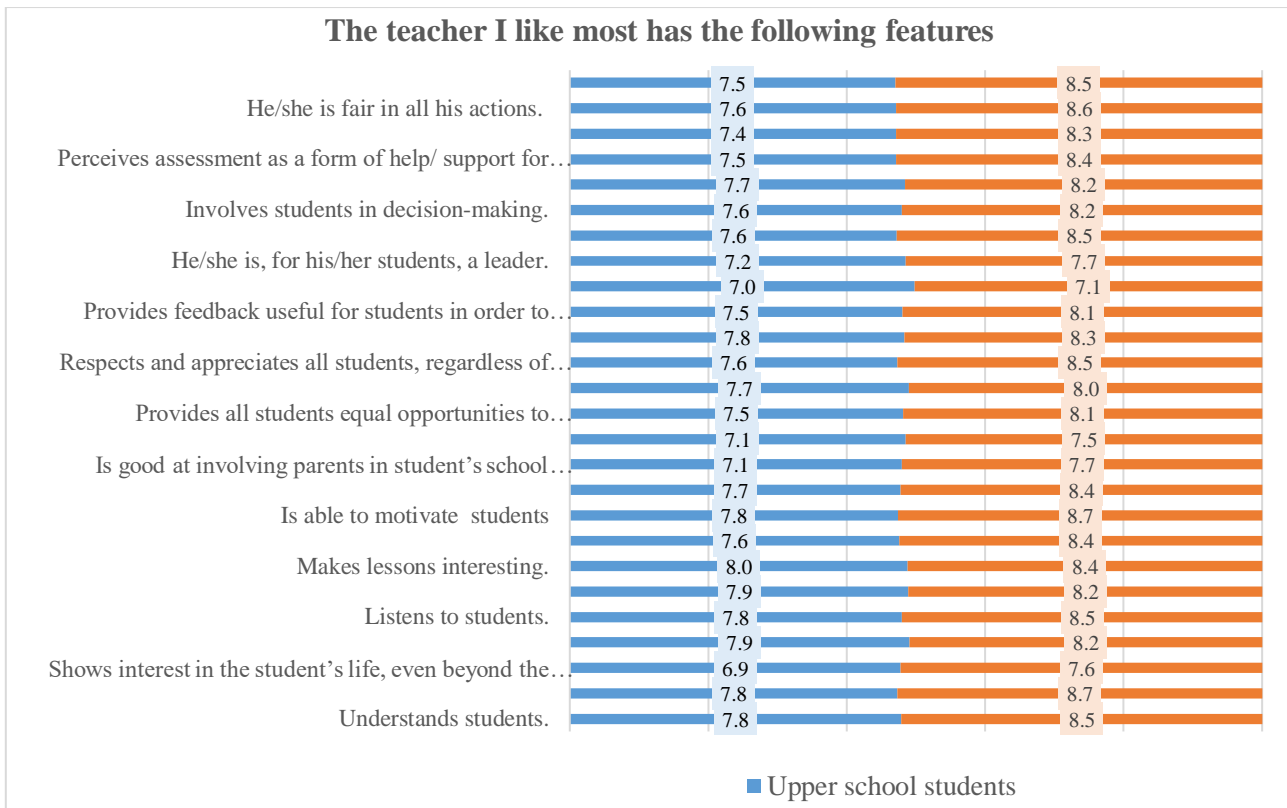
**Figure no 7. The features of the teachers that students like most (Portugal)**

In **Romania**, the teacher most loved by students has the following four most important features: *respects students, listens to students, makes lessons interesting, is able to motivate students.*

From the data (Figure no 8), the features that seem to be less important are *the ability to involve parents in the student learning process, the ability to be a leader for students and to make interdisciplinary lessons, connecting them with other school subjects.*

For middle school students, the most important features are: *can motivate students and respect students* (both 8.7 average value); *He/She is fair in all its actions* (8.6 average value).

The less important ones correspond to (some of) those that had been listed by upper school students; *Learn with your students* (average value 7.1); *Connects lessons to other school subjects* (7.5 average value); *It sees interest in the life of the student, even beyond the scholastic aspects* (7.5 average value).



**Figure no 8. The features of the teachers that students like most (Romania)**

### 3. Motivations/reasons related to the wish to leave school (in opinions of early school leavers)

In the table below, we present the opinions of early school leavers from **Lithuania** and **Romania** about the reasons related to the wish to leave school.

**Table no 21. The reasons related to the wish to leave school  
(opinions of early school leavers)**

Country	Most important reasons ESLs (average value)	Least important reasons ESLs (average value)
<b>Romania</b>	I wanted to go to work (8.3) I felt I did not belong to the school (8.2) The school subjects were not relevant to what I wanted to do (7.4)	I have been bullied (4.3) I had been failed (4.7) I don't get along with teachers <i>and</i> I expected to study different school subjects than I was studying (both 5.5)
<b>Lithuania</b>	I believe the school subjects were not interesting (8.1) I did not feel comfortable at school <i>and</i> I thought I'm not able to respond adequately to school demands (both 7.8) The teaching methods and tools of my teachers were not very engaging (7.7)	I wanted to live in other country with my parents (3.6 ) I have been bullied (4.9) I wanted to go to work (5.2)

**Table no 22. The comparison between students` and ESLs` reasons for leaving the school**

Country	Most important reasons (average value)	Least important reasons (average value)
<b>Romania</b>	ESLs	ESLs
	I wanted to go to work (8.3) I felt I did not belong to the school (8.2) The school subjects were not relevant to what I wanted to do. (7.4)	I have been bullied (4.3) I had been failed.(4.7) I don't get along with teachers I expected to study different school subjects than I was studying. (both 5.5 )
	Students	Students
	I think my teachers don`t support me in the learning activity (6.1) I want to live in other country with my parents (5.7) The school subjects are not important to what I want to do and I expected to study different school subjects than I`m now studying.(5.1)	I think school is an useless institution. (2.5) I have been failed (2.6)
<b>Lithuania</b>	ESLs	ESLs
	I believe the school subjects were not interesting (8.1) I did not feel comfortable at school I thought I`m not able to respond adequately to school demands (both 7.8) The teaching methods and tools of my teachers were not very engaging (7.7)	I wanted to live in other country with my parents.(3.6 ) I have been bullied (4.9) I wanted to go to work.(5.2),
	Students	Students
	I want to go to work (6.6) The school subjects are not important to what I want to do (6.4) The teaching methods and tools of my teachers are not very engaging (6.3)	I am being bullied (5.0) I think school is an useless institution(5.1) I have been failed (5.3).

We can see that the most important reasons for ESLs from **Lithuania** were *lack of interest in school subjects* (8.1 average value of importance on 10); *not feeling comfortable at school* and the thought that *not being able to respond adequately to school demands* (both 7.8 average values). The least important reasons which had influence on their choice are: *the willingness to live in another country with their parents* (3.6 average value), *the desire to go to work* (5.2 average value), *have been bullied* (4.9 average value) and the idea that *school was useless institution* (5.8 average value).

In **Romania**, the most five important reasons which pushed to leaving school are: *willingness to go to work* (8.3 average value); *lack of belonging to the school* (8.2 average value); *thought of school subjects not relevant* (7.4 average value); *lack of support from teachers in learning activity* (7.3 average value); *teaching methods and tools not so engaging* (7.2 average value).

### 4.3. Results from interviews aimed at students and ESLs

The research aimed at getting in depth understanding of students perceptions about school, namely important factors supporting and not supporting their willingness/ decisions to stay at school till mature age.

Two research questions were formulated to get answers to our inquiry: *Why do students drop out of a school* and *Why do students do not attend or avoid attending a school?*

Data analysis revealed:

**Supporting factors:** 1. *family related factors* (support; authority, model examples); 2. *school related factors* (caring teachers, supportive schoolmates, engaging tasks). 3. *person (oneself) related factors* (self-motivation; self-concentration/self-regulation); 4. *outside environment factors* (friends, model examples and future life perspectives).

**Preventing factors** are: 1. *person (oneself) related factors* (management of emotions; low self-esteem; lack of will; not seeing meaning of learning; learning difficulties); 2. *school related factors* (teachers' behaviour, classmates' behaviour; lack of teachers support; poor classroom management; not interesting lessons). 3. *family related factors* (lack of family support; need to support family) 4. *outside environment factors* – attractive/easy life examples; having fun with friends).

**Socio-relational aspects** play major role for students' willingness to attend or not to attend lessons, to stay at school or leave it. Either teachers or classmates have to be those, who support individual pupil. Teachers support reflects in willingness to help, to explain, in showing respect to students' personalities. Classmates support reflects in collegial relationships, in working together. Family support is also important. Very few students shared stories not getting support from a family. In general, parents support their children in one or another way – by a good, encouraging word, by drawing future life perspectives, by helping to do homework.

**Organization of a learning process** is at the second place. It includes teachers' ability or incapability to make lessons interesting – to use real life examples, to build learning on students' interests, hobbies, and needs; to manage classroom; to guide students in their individual learning.

*Personal factors* are at the third place. Students also find or do not find internal, personal aspects that make influence on their approach to learning. Many of them shared stories about being able to support themselves. But there are some stories about lack of internal strengths as well.

*Outside, external, out of school factors* are also important. Examples of a professional success of others built on learning results inspire students for learning and support internal motivation. Examples of “stars” life are got as life without much learning *efforts* model. Such life looks attractive and easy going. Interesting out of school activities being with friends, enjoying hobbies and free life are some kind of obstacles to engage in school life. At some scale, students see confrontation between what is learned at school and what is needed for life. In very rare cases, pupil report how school learning is connected with life.

Data analysis also provided answers to a question, *why it is worth going to school*.

There are two main positive factors: school and person (oneself) related.

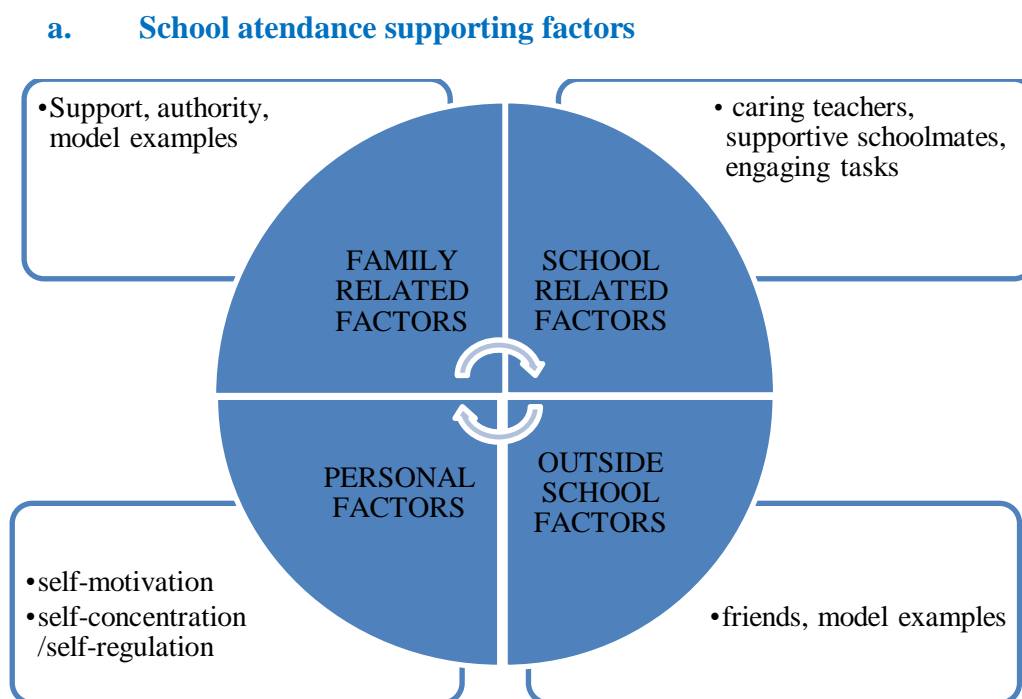
*School related factors*. Students see value of school in relationships with others school mates; relationships with teachers; in getting new knowledge, new models of behaviour; they like schools microclimate and physical environment. They also think that is worth going to school because of *personal value* - possibility to know oneself better, to reveal oneself, to learn for a future benefits. There are many statements about school usefulness for a future life, better job in presented data. But those statements are of declarative character mostly.

Data analysis revealed students perceptions about *ideal and/ or better school*. Students give concrete suggestions how situation can be improved. Factors that might make students *better learners* and/or make *happier* at school are following: 1. *person (onself) related factors* (change of approach to learning; change of personal behaviour). 2. *school related factors* (better relationships among students; between relationships among students and teachers, support of teachers; different organization of learning process; fair assessment; improvement of school environment).

Data analysis helped to find more explicit answer to the second part of the second question: *Why do students avoid attending a school?* But we have quite poor answer to the question *why did students drop out of a school?* The most evident answer – need to work, to support family, or wish to start working, to do real life things. Second, not so directive answer is lack of support from teachers, school, sometimes family.

## Data analysis by themes, categories and subcategories

We present short, concentrated overview of data analysis in major themes: *School attendance supporting factors*; *School attendance preventing factors*; *Factors that could make learning more attractive*. Each big theme has its own categories and subcategories that emerged from partner data.



**Figure no 9. School attendance supporting factors**

**Family related factors:** “Support” looks like encouragement to learn, talking about positive sides of learning, about trust, believe in children’s’ capacity to learn and be successful. “Authority” has some „pushy” aspect – pointing out to a „black work” and a „white collar work“; „better future“, etc. Model examples usually are older brothers and sisters.

**School related factors:** „Caring teachers“ mean capacity to recognize students’ strengths, needs, to find best way to support his/her learning. „Supportive classmates” mean to work together, to express gratitude, to be together in a learning process.

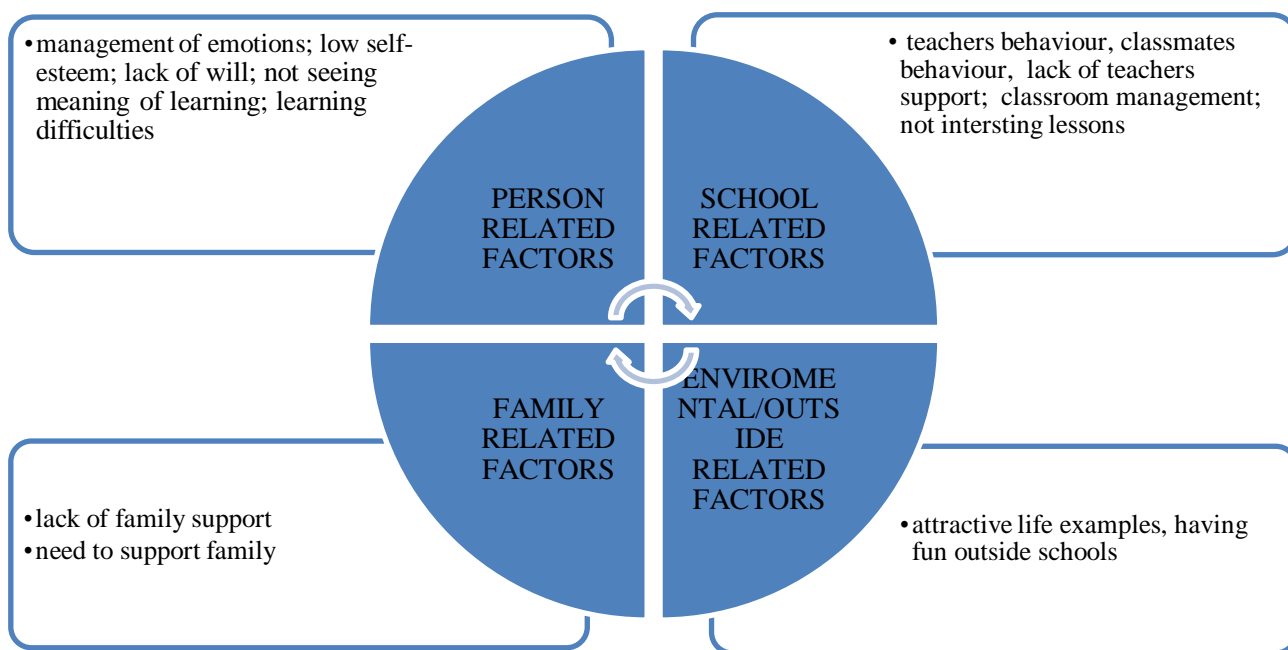
**Personal factors:** “Self-motivation” is about wish to be successful, to get better grades, and about believe in ones strengths. “Self-concentration” stands for personal decision to concentrate on learning because of wish not to lose, not to drop-out. It is also about ability to self-regulate oneself in a learning process finding best way to learn and to understand things.



**Outside school environment factors:** “Outside school environment factors” are alive, positive examples of friends and people of different professions that share their success stories at and outside school. Students project their future lives and understand value of school learning in getting concrete profession.

There are couple of examples (LT) that stand for a small category: “sense of belonging to a school community”. It means students ability to contribute to a creation of a school culture, participation in school events, making decisions: *It was interesting, because you could feel that you do something and do not say that everything is going wrong, nothing changes (LT\_007).*

**b. School attendance preventing factors**



**Figure no 10. School attendance preventing factors**

**Person related factors** were grouped into five categories: management of emotions (*But in a moment of anger, you don't listen to anyone because you don't trust anyone as, actually, IT\_12\_ESL*), low self-esteem (*If I see that someone is better than me, then I will stay silent. For example, a girl will be dressed well than me; I will not come closer and do not talk, LT\_003*), lack of will (*I also find it tiring to have to wake up early. But it's important, PT\_4*), not seeing meaning of learning (*It is boring to learn, LT\_004*) and learning difficulties (*You don't want to go to school because you fail at something, at some subject, LT\_007*).

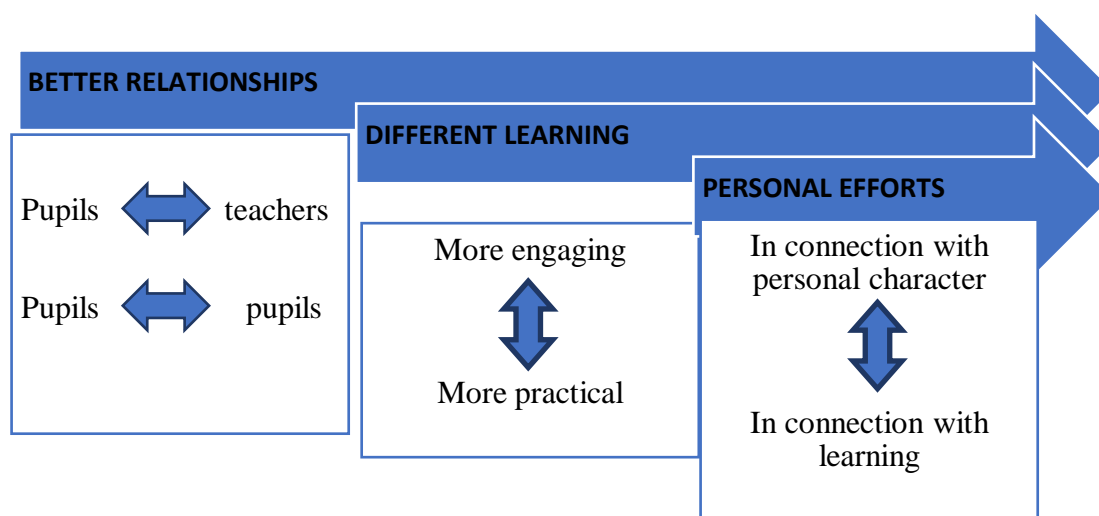
**School related factors:** “Teacher’s behaviour” has to do with not respectful, sometimes even insulting actions, bullying towards individual students. The same with other classmates behaviour – students are linked to tease those who are less capable, differently looking, less successful at school. Students also lack teachers support in their individual learning. Those who would like to concentrate on learning sometimes are disrupted by noise in a classroom. Many complain about not interesting lessons – a lot of academic writing, traditional learning, dull learning methods, disconnection between curriculum and real life content.

**Family related factors:** There are not so many examples of such kind. But few of them speak for an urgent need to support family by getting to work. Some examples speak for poor family relations and parents’ addictions that students have to face and deal with.

**Outside environment related factors:** There are many examples about having fun outside school with friends, involvement in hobbies that seem to be more interesting than school life. And there are couple of so called “easy life without much learning” examples that make students think that it may happen with them as well.

### c. Factors that could make learning and school more attractive

We grouped all data into three big categories: 1) *Better relationships – between students and teachers; among students;* 2) *Different learning – more engaging, more practical;* c) *Personal efforts – in connection with personal character and in connection with learning.* There are couple of more categories which could be named “Organization of a school day or/and lesson” and “Physical school environment”.



**Figure no 11. Factors that could make learning and school more attractive**

**Better relationships:** Better relationships between teachers and students are seen as *equal, respectful, supportive, and emphatic*. Students long for more *relaxed and friendly relationships*. Better peer relationships are seen as *open, supportive, accepted, and welcoming*. In both cases students speak about equality and respect to a diversity in a broad sense.

**Different learning:** More engaged learning is about active, group and project based learning, in more relaxed learning atmosphere, where everyone can feel free and able to build their learning on individual interests and strengths. More practical learning is about “hands on” activities, clearly connected with professional life, integration of academic and non-academic teaching. It is also about real life based curriculum.

**Personal efforts:** Personal efforts are twofold – related with change of personal behaviour, development of character and with more time, attention to learning. In many situations they are going together: “not to be shy and go to blackboard”; “be more attentive and study more”; “Not to be lazy and do homework”, etc. In fact, students are quite critical about one self and are able to name personal reasons of not being successful at school.

While talking about “dream school” students also mention different organization of a learning process. They describe how school day could look like as well as physical environment of a school.

**Organization of a school day/lesson** in students’ opinion could be more relaxed, with more freedom: *no fixed schedule and without marks. (RO\_1); bigger lunch hours <....> 50 minutes of lessons.(PT\_6\_2); enough courses that we can choose from. (PT\_11) ; less lessons (LT\_1); less homework (LT\_004); during intervals play a ball in a field. (PT\_1).*

**Physical environment of school** could be spacer (*a big, white building, PT\_2*); with nice canteen, diverse menu (*to choose what we want\_PT\_2*); to have garden, space to play and have sport activities (*to have a gym, to have a library inside school\_IT\_8*).

#### 4.4 Results from focus group addressed to teachers

Focus groups were carried by each partner country in order to deepen results got from teachers and students quantitative research. Each partner country received tailored focus groups questions, in accordance with quantitative research results. Each partner got more data and understanding about issues, concerned respective schools, that participated in the previous research.

**Profile of focus group participants:** Each partner country carried out 2 focus groups – first one about results of teachers’ questionnaire, another one – about results of students’ questionnaire. Each group was represented by teachers of different age, subjects, school level and gender. First group was

represented by 45 lower and upper secondary school teachers (6 males and 39 females), representing humanities, science, technologies, social and nature sciences, physical education and special education. Age range – from 25 till 60. Second group was represented by 42 (4 males and 38 females) lower and upper secondary school teachers, representing humanities, science, technologies, social and nature sciences, physical education and special education. Age range – from 25 till 60.

**Data analysis method:** Content analysis was used to analyse focus groups participants' responses to each question.

**Findings:** Overall findings, that emerged from content analysis, as responses to the main topics, identified by project partners presented below.

### 1. Teachers perceptions of ESL and main causes of ESL

Teachers perceive potential school dropout and ESL as wider social phenomenon, associated not only with school. Among significant external social factors have been mentioned: a) economic problems and need to support families (LT, RO); b) low educational background of parents (PT, RO; LT); c) not flexible education system, too academic, rigid curriculum, not addressed to individual student needs (LT, RO, IT, PT); d) lack of overall respect to a school (RO); e) influence of media and social networks in forming values and attitudes towards school (LT, RO, PT); f) school rankings; g) in some cases – ethnical family background (RO, PT)

*The ESL phenomenon represents - in facts - the expression of the lack of respect regards the school, but also the disagreement concerning the scholar institution and its rules in general[RO\_9];*

*Minorities and cultural issues have a lot of influence on the life path of children and influence the risk of ESL as well as the expectations that family and students have about the school [PT]*

*Whoever compels the gypsies to come to school is the State, because it is not part of their culture. But everything is irregular and depends a lot on the cases [PT]*

Most popular internal factors addressed to students: a) wish to start early independent life, earn money and to experience success (RO, LT); b) incapability to cope with learning problems (LT, RO, PT, IT); c) lack of desire and commitment (PT; IT); d) unjustified expectations and self-evaluation (LT). All those factors could be called as consciousness alliance from school. Leaving school as a way to hide or to ignore personal problems (loneliness, weakness, low self-esteem) can be considered as not conscious alliance (IT).

*It is because of games.... They play computer games and experience immediate success. Computer says: „ Good try! Success! Winner!“. Little effort, quick result. [LT\_3]*

*it is true that they blame others but because they have to unload their weakness onto someone, their vulnerability, to hide themselves, to avoid facing the problem [IT\_F]*

Teachers perceive ESL as a complex phenomenon. Social and family factors are considered to be essential factors. The general tendency is to place responsibility not on school or/ and teachers. Society, family, local or central government, education system responsible for ESL, more than teachers themselves.

## **2. Pedagogical, personal and communicational skills used to work with students**

Teachers acknowledge that they meet some problems working with students. Many of them mention difficulties to manage big classrooms (RO, IT, PT) and this factor is linked with incapability to see each student to respond adequately. Some teachers acknowledge lack of socio-emotional competence on behalf of male teachers (IT); lack of respect, justice and appreciation for students (PT). We present below a few examples concern pedagogical – psychological competencies of teachers (RO, LT).

*This topic is very complicated. Classes are getting bigger, more heterogeneous, there is more diversity. Within the same school year there are several levels of knowledge and it is very difficult to reach all students and obey the curriculum [PT]*

*It is fundamental to have psychosocial skills to be a good teacher. We deal with students who are people, so this kind of skills are basic [PT]*

*Some situations are generated mainly by the lack of explanations - from teachers' part - concerning the links that theory must have into practice, in a great measure [RO\_2];*

Teachers do not have many problems to communicate and work with students. Communication problems are mainly concerned with big classroom management, not social competence. Lack of psychological competence is mentioned among few PT and LT teachers. Pedagogical competencies are mentioned only in a single case.

### 3. Main causes of conflictual relations with students and resolute strategies used

Focus groups participants almost do not report any conflictual situations with students. They try to look for a way to reach and support each student. Teachers rather talk about students' internal conflicts with school: not ability to come up with school requirements, distance between academic content and real life, lack of motivation and non-attendance of lessons (PT, IT, LT, RO). Only one concrete example was found about teacher coming into a conflict with student:

*Sometimes teachers want not to give up – they do not find common language with students, and do not want to find. He/she says: it is a rule; such order you have to follow. Students notice that teacher himself/herself goes to a conflict – even makes it bigger than in fact it is. Instead of saying: stay after lesson and we will talk, he or she exaggerates conflict. [LT-2]*

Teachers almost do not have conflicts (or do not come into conflicts) with students. They try to avoid conflictual situations by looking for positive solutions.

### 4. Challenges in daily work with students

Majority of respondents talk about teachers' overload – having too many roles and responsibilities that consequently take their attention away from main teacher's work (IT, PT, RO). Teachers also feel not competent to compete with real life “seductions” (IT, LT). They feel obliged to deliver official programs that not always are in line with real needs. Some teachers report about difficulties to reach students, because students themselves are not aware of their strengths, needs, wishes (IT). Teachers admit that upper secondary students need special counselling on selecting study profiles (RO). Sometimes they choose wrong profiles and then come into trouble with learning. And there are cases when teachers do provide consultations, but students get them not as support, but as punishment (LT). Romanian teachers report about lack of financial resources to equip school with modern technologies and make learning more attractive.

*There is a huge pressure faced by the teacher, mainly for preparing different reports that have nothing to do directly with the learning process. However, teachers remain anchored as essential part of the learning process, and I do not think that there is a lack of interest from their part [RO\_5]*

*Guiding hours are the only ones in which students can talk, otherwise we do not have enough time; but not all teachers are also masters [RO\_5].*

*Classes are getting bigger, more heterogeneous, there is more diversity. Within the same school year there are several levels of knowledge and it is very difficult to reach all students and obey the curriculum [PT]*

*We have consultations [LT\_4] <...> but they run away and we are not able to force students [LT\_9].*

*There is a great need for school counseling and guidance[RO\_6].*

Teachers face daily challenge being overload and overwhelmed with many other responsibilities at school. They work with big classrooms and are not able to meet each student's needs, as they have not enough time for it. They also admit that some students need counselling and guidance, that they, teachers are not always capable to provide.

## **5. Representations/ beliefs of the factors which can increase student commitment and student motivation**

Teachers believe that students commitment can be increased by: a) changing or adapting school curriculum, making it more close to real life and students' needs; b) making smaller classrooms; c) taking of some responsibilities from teachers' shoulders; d) giving more governmental support in terms of finances, counselling and respect; e) change in family position/approach towards school; family collaboration.

Almost all factors are of external character. Teachers not speak much about their personal investment into an issue.

## **6. School strategies to prevent ESL**

School strategies to prevent ESL have mainly to do with bigger focus on student not official curriculum. Teachers have to try to see each student behind program (RO, PT, LT, IT), to give positive feedback (RO). Schools also have to refuse from selection of best students, leaving "losers" to others (PT).

*The issue of school segregation happens. When there is a good student, everyone wants him/her but when he/she is bad, it is not so. When the student is a "bad" one, they say there are no longer places to accept him/her [PT]*

*But we do not always provide feedback to students, appreciating each student; the students see and say, that's why we have found a way to record the progress of each student (an additional notebook, where they get points for involvement, themes, initiative, effort to prepare the room before time-brought map, erased board, etc) [RO\_9].*

*Teachers should try to know students more, to communicate with them, to understand them and to help them [RO\_4].*

*I think, that teaching methods and school as such can make great impact on students' behaviour. But school has to have an aim – what it wants to achieve, and then we can strive towards it. If we want our students to read more, we can make plan together how we will do it. We have common rule not to use phones during lesson. But students do not follow this rule. What can we do? We can decide to have some concrete punishment system and keep it. [LT\_9]*

*A student says: "I will go abroad. My brother is already here, and I do not need English. I say:" OK. Just imagine – you are abroad and have got ill. You go to doctor and have to explain what is wrong with you. How it will happen without language? "Student understands situation and is more linked to learn. But it does not happen automatically. Teacher has to present real life examples [LT\_3]*

Teachers feel that most that they can do about ESL is to try to see student behind curriculum and behind all obstacles.

## **7. Teaching methods used to prevent the school disengagement**

It has to be said, that teaching methods are not considered crucial for staying at school or leaving it. Teachers admit that not everyone and not always use modern teaching-learning methods. Contrary – many of them say that they use group work, pair learning and collaborative learning strategies, project work, but it does not help to engage more into learning process (PT, IT, LT). Modern methods require too much efforts, time and resources. Teachers think, that positive reinforcement is more important than use of ICT or any modern methods (PT). Some teachers even consider “new methods” to be just a play or a joke, waste of time (PT, IT). Teachers think that not everyone is ready for innovations and students themselves lack focus on innovative teaching methods. Frontal teaching helps to control class and keep attention (IT). Many teachers meet students' evaluation and self-evaluation problem when working in groups. Romanian teachers make emphasis on shortage of modern technologies in classrooms, but at the same time say, that it does not make big deal. Teachers make emphasis on experimental learning strategies, that are helpful for potential ESL. Opinion of Lithuanian teachers is similar. They support idea, that passive teaching is dull, not involving and not appropriate for students.

*As for collaborative learning, the group work is a waste of time, as we don't have much time and the clock is ticking. Well, I think that it is true that these are the most commonly used methods, even as a matter of necessity [IT\_C]*



*I agree with the data obtained through questionnaires and also consider that the most important methods are those based on communication, investigation and experimentation [RO\_4]*

*Actually, we normally use the peer-to-peer method, but the problem is that the roles are hardly ever explained... there may not be a scale with precise rules, therefore those who are supposed to help their friends usually get tired and loose motivation. Setting up rules is tough and requires lots of time. [IT\_B]*

*I'm talking about self-assessment ... kids have a hard time self-evaluating themselves, because it's not easy ... first you have to give information on how to do it and for us it's also very tiring, but we should learn to give very precise descriptors on which kids can self-evaluate themselves. I don't find it wrong but it's not so easy to carry out every day [IT\_A].*

*Experiential learning, when one can touch and to feel is a big thing [LT\_5]*

*Students like integrated lessons. We try integrate English, physics and literature. We can integrate two or three subjects. We learn math in English and students can get two grades at once [LT\_8].*

*Students start like learning if they work in non-traditional way. For example, in pairs. It is easier to reach a goal, to get help from friends and learn from them. [LT\_3].*

*I do not image a lesson without ICT. I suggest three sources of information to use for 11-12th graders. They search for them in self phones or library. <...> i do not consider it as ICT competence. It is just regular way of learning [LT\_10].*

Many teachers use interactive teaching and learning methods, such as pair or group work, collaborative work strategies, mind maps, etc. But at the same time they admit that it takes time and additional efforts on teachers' part. Some teachers find difficult to assess students and to manage productive learning process while using modern teaching methods. Romanian and Lithuanian teachers look to be more in favour of interactive methods and use of ICT than colleagues from Portugal and Italy.

## **8. Bullying and school drop out**

Bullying is not considered to be a main reason to leave a school. Teacher do not witness many examples of this phenomenon in their own practice. Italian teachers say, that if such students exist, they don't want to talk about his problem [IT\_A], because they are afraid [IT\_O]. Lithuanian teachers say, that everybody knows everybody – so why it is easy to control situation, to overcome possible bullying situations. But they acknowledge exists of a problem at a certain level:

*<...> she is not liked by classmates – she is not accepted in a group. She is always alone during brakes and lessons. Sometimes classmates change place in a classroom because don't want to sit close to her [LT\_3]*

*We have electronic bullying. It becomes more and more popular <...> if something happens in the evening with a student, you will not see him in a classroom next morning [LT\_5].*

*We have class where only few students are good at learning. So the rest of a group, those who are bad at learning, push good learners and nickname them [LT\_9]*

Bullying is not explicitly recognised phenomenon and strictly associated with ESL in the project schools. Bullying is associated with some kind of diversity – belonging to special social, ethnical groups, different behaviour.

## **5. Conclusions**

Early school leaving is a complex problem, so it is not easy to prevent/reduce/combat. This idea is highlighted by the multitude and complexity of the data obtained in the present study. After analyzing all the data of our research (results from questionnaire addressed to teachers, from questionnaire addressed to students, from interviews aimed at students and ESLs and from focus group addressed to teachers), we can conclude the following.

There are multiple causes that determine early school leaving, of which those associated with the educational environment, targeted in this study, can be grouped into five categories: causes generated by variables specific to the education system, causes generated by variables related to school organization, causes generated by variables related the didactic personality of the teacher, causes generated by variables related to class and causes generated by variables specific to student. Only if these causes are accurately identified and „treated” through effective strategies, the ESL rate can be substantially reduced.

Teachers consider that social and family factors are essential factors in ESL problem. The general tendency is to place responsibility not on school or/ and teachers. Society, family, local or central government, education system are considered responsible for ESL, more than teachers themselves. In the same time, they face daily challenge being overload and overwhelmed with many other responsibilities at school. They work with big classrooms and are not able to meet each student’s needs, as they have not enough time for it. They also admit that some students need counselling and guidance, that they, teachers, are not always capable to provide.

Also, teachers consider that the best strategies for preventing ESL are those that value the partnership between school and family. Very important are the competences that teachers must possess, in order to successfully cope with the ESL phenomenon: specialty competences, psycho-pedagogical competences, psychosocial competences and managerial competences.

Those ideas mentioned above are just a few of the ones on which we based the construction of the *Typological Model – student at ESL risk*. A good knowlegde of the three categories of students at ESL

risk proposed by our model (presented in Chapter 3) and the relevant indicators for each category, allows us, in the next steps of the project, to find the best solutions to effectively manage ESL phenomenon.

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