Proposal for simple good practice template

(Source: SDC policy dialogue data sheets)

The idea of this template is to gather examples of practices / ways of (or attempts in progress) dealing with selected specific issues linked to Roma inclusion from across SDC offices in the Western Balkans and New EU member states. Initially, the examples are for internal use only.

The approach should enable cases to be grouped, in order to gather a range of good practices around a particular issue. This will make it easier for staff to search for practices that are useful to them. The simplified format should be a first step – a longer template is available as a source of inspiration to complete this one if it is felt that more information is required. The idea is that there is a subject area or issue, and that examples of good practice relating to this issue can be gathered from different contexts/countries.

Case name: Joint Programme for Roma and Marginalised Groups Inclusion – component: UNICEF

1. Subject/issue	Combating dropout and early school leaving (ESL) in Serbia; Development of school based drop-out prevention and intervention mechanisms
2. Sector, Country	Inclusive Education/ Governance, Serbia
3. Background, antecedent	Dropping out of school is a complex social phenomena and global challenge for governments. Efficient combating of drop out can enhance economic growth, employment and social development. As such, it stands for one of the greatest educational challenges in Serbia and it has been recognised as a policy priority area.
	The Strategy of Education Development in Serbia until 2020 (SEDS 2020) calls for the provision of high quality education for all, increase of coverage and attainment at all levels of education, maintaining of the relevance of the content and efficiency increase. The Strategy implementation is primarily focused on the development of human capital in Serbia which includes inclusion of Roma pupils and pupils from other vulnerable groups (children from poor families, children with disabilities and from rural areas).
	Primary school completion rate in Serbia is generally high, but it hides a large disparity between the general population and children from vulnerable groups - especially children living in Roma settlements. Primary school enrolment for the general population is 97 per cent, while for Roma it is 69 per cent. The completion rate for the general population is 93 per cent, compared to only 64 per cent for children from

	Roma settlements. 89 per cent of the secondary-school aged adolescents among the general population attend secondary school, while this is the case for only 22 per cent of adolescents from Roma settlements (only 15 per cent of girls). According to the statistical data – (Republic Statistical Office 2011, DevInfo), the secondary school completion rate is 84 per cent (88 per cent for girls, 81 per cent for boys); it is significantly lower for children from vulnerable groups. While a legal framework for inclusive education exists since 2009, in 2013 for the first time law has recognised the need to address dropout related issues in systemic way at the school level. The project is directly supporting implementation of the new legislative related to drop-out prevention at the national and school level.
4. Objectives	Project objective is to contribute to decreasing of dropout of children and adolescents through the development, establishment and implementation of the school based models for drop-out prevention (consisting of mechanisms for early identification of children at risk of dropping out, as well as prevention and intervention measures).
5. Current Status	Drop-out prevention and intervention measures at the school level have been designed and are in the process of piloting with the aim to be scaled up after evaluation. Monitoring of the implementation of the drop-out prevention model in pilot schools has shown the model provides strong positive effects - its application halved drop-out rate (53% lower than in 2014). 67% of students who dropped in 2015 had no individual support plan, compared to 9% of students with an individual support plan.
6. Key-Stakeholders and their Roles / Responsibilities	The project is being implemented in cooperation of UNICEF Serbia, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, the NGO Centre for Education Policy and 10 schools (4 primary and 6 secondary schools from 7 municipalities), with the support of SDC and UNIQLO. This project is a part of UNICEF broader initiative in the area of drop-out prevention which includes knowledge generation, support to evidence based policy making, including the further development of legal and institutional framework for drop-out prevention. Since addressing drop-out issues require multi-level interventions and cross-sectoral cooperation,

	UNICEF initiated establishment of the Project Board consisting of the: National Education Council, Council for Vocational Education and Adult Education, Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Republic Institute for Social Protection and the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit. Main responsibilities of the Project Board are the overall project monitoring, supervision and strategic role. At the local level schools have established local teams for drop-out prevention consisting of different school professionals, but also, in accordance with the concrete situations representatives of other local institutions and organizations (health care and center for social work, local CSOs, including local Roma organizations).
7. Capacity building and Sustainability	This model/project is piloting systemic solution for addressing drop out at the school level. Based on the pilot and lessons learned, the project will produce resource pack for schools (guides and good practice examples) that will be available to all schools in Serbia.

The model for drop-out prevention is designed in such a way that is not resource intensive and can be easily implemented across the Serbian educational system mostly through existing human resources and competencies, with possibility to involve teachers from schools with good results in drop-out prevention as mentors in the future. |
| 8. Institutionalization (if any) | The project is directly supporting implementation of the new legislative related to drop-out prevention at the national and school level.

Its implementation is being strongly monitored and evaluated. Results are being presented to the inter-sectoral Steering Committee, whose members are in charge of drop-out policy development and implementation, as indicated in the background and the part related to key-stakeholders and their roles and responsibilities. |
| 9.   Interfaces   /   Need   for coordination with other key issues | There is a need for vertical coordination within education sector in the process of development of the drop-out prevention model, its piloting, evaluating, eventual adaptation as well as scaling up.

Coordination between education, health, social and sector in charge for youth and sport is needed so that the drop-out risk factors can be addressed in a holistic manner. |

10. Recommendations	While developing models for drop-out prevention, following should be taking into account:
	• They should target and prevent a range of different factors that lead to drop out;
	• They should involve measures that are most effective in relation to the budget requirements (cost-benefit criterion);
	• They should be based on existing human resources and high possibility of sustainability within a national context and existing legislative framework;
	• "Easy" implementation based on existing human resources and high possibility of sustainability within a national context and existing legislative framework.
	• They should involve entire school - whole school approach is mandatory
	• They should target different aspects of the school quality including learning, ethos, support to students etc.
11. Why is this a good practice? Reflection and learning	Students at risk of drop-out and early school leaving are particularly targeted by the model/project. Students (age 7 to 19) at risk of ESL (target group) are identified according to following criteria:
	1. Attendance. Predictors: (a) Poor attendance; (b) Seasonal attendance
	2. Academic experience and performance. Predictors: (a) Poor educational attainment; (b) Grade repetition/Late enrolment; (c) Multiple school transfers
	3. Behaviour. Predictor: (a) Misbehaviour, aggressive behaviour
	4. Parental involvement. Predictors: (a) Lack of family support; (b) Lack of family engagement with the institution
	5. Student engagement. Predictors: (a) Lack of social engagement in school; (b) Lack of academic engagement in school; (c) History of drop-out
	6. Individual and social vulnerability factors. Predictors: (a) Not being fluent in Serbian language and migrant background, (c) High family mobility; (d) Sudden change in family situation; (e) Economic hardship; (f) Lack of financial support for schooling (e.g. for school appliances, transportation etc.); (g) Substance misuse by the child or family members; (h) Family history of early school leaving

(siblings in particular); (i) Being affected by bullying and violence; (j) Being affected by discrimination or segregation (children with special education needs, member of ethnic minority etc.); (k) Integration or re-integration in an institution following a long-term hospitalisation or placed in residential institution (children with special needs or young offenders), (l) Children who have been in conflict with the law (m) Living distance from school and/or attending detached classes.

The model consists of three core components:

1) Early warning and intervention system (EWIS),

2) Prevention and response measures at the level of the institution (parental engagement, peer support, model for remedial teaching),

3) Capacity building and activities targeted at changing school culture. Additionally, guidelines and training packages for schools on how to implement innovative model are developed and disseminated, as well as other support material.

The ESL school Team is working on the identification of children at risk; establishment of the early warning system; and definition of adequate support measures. Team is producing action plan related to the model implementation for their own school (including individual interventions/support for children at risk (case management) and support to schools to strengthen education quality and support to all students). Each action plan includes concretisation of each activity (including all cases - Individual support plans), timeline, actors involved (individuals, school teams, peers local organizations and institutions), tasks division and responsibilities among actors, expected results, system of internal reporting, and evaluation of sustainability of the model upon completion of the project etc.

Schools are supported by experienced education experts - mentors for preparation and implementation of their action plans. Mentors are in charge to support schools in planning and implementation of the ESL prevention and intervention model as well as to act as "critical friends" who are facilitating changes of school culture. Also, they are supporting schools to develop inter-sectoral cooperation at the municipal level and to involve other stakeholders relevant for drop-out prevention (social welfare centres, other educational institutions, CSOs etc.).

Processes of design, implementation and monitoring of the project are supported by the overarching

| | project team (composed by UNICEF and Centre for Education Policy representatives) and the project steering committee which involves different relevant stakeholders (ministries in charge of education, social welfare, health, youth etc.).

The core value of such approach is implementation of a holistic and multidimensional intervention which combines individualised support for the students at risk of dropout as well as continuous support to schools in capacity building, improvement of the school culture and cross-sectoral cooperation in order to secure sustainability of the model.

Implementation of the model requires the following steps to be implemented cyclically:

1. *Establishment of the ESL prevention team under school principals' supervision* - The school establishes a team in charge of planning and coordinating activities aimed at ESL prevention. Members of the ESL prevention team are appointed by school principal. The team comprises of core members (e.g. teachers, psychologists/pedagogues, at least one representative of the of the school inclusion team[1], Roma pedagogical assistant, etc. depending of school resources, needs and size) and extended team members if needed (e.g. Centre for Social Work representatives, Municipality representative and NGO/Civil Society Organisations involved in youth and community services, parents, students' parliament representatives, police representative, etc. where relevant).

2. *Identification of students at risk of ESL* - necessary information for the identification of students are available from institution's information management system, students' personal files and information provided by class masters. Based on available information from different sources (school evidence, interview with parents, interview of students, observation of students...), class master assesses with support of the ESL prevention team, students against risk factors which are presented to all the schools by the project representatives. Based on the assessment, class masters identify students at risk of ESL and communicate the list of students to the ESL prevention team. This approach very successfully identifies 5% of students with highest risk of ESL with all risk factors triggered.

3. *Identifying the needs of individual students* – The ESL prevention team assesses the needs of at-high risk students in order to decide adequate interventions. The needs assessment focuses on the |

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[1] Mandatory team in all the Serbian schools

risk causes rather than the risk symptoms. The needs assessment is conducted by the ESL prevention team in cooperation with the class master, through discussions with the student and student's classmates where appropriate, the family, the school's pedagogical and psychological teams and other external stakeholders as necessary such as the centre for social work or youth services providers.

4. *Create individual support plan for ESL prevention for each identified individual student* – for each individual identified students, individual support plans is developed and implementation of interventions is monitored by the ESL prevention team. In other words, interventions are tailored to the students' needs. The ESL prevention team is involved in the development of the institution attendance policy and subsequent mechanism to tackle absenteeism and truancy.

5. *Implementation and monitoring of the implementation of interventions and adjusting (if needed)* – every individualised support plan is managed by one school teacher from or outside the ESL prevention team. During the implementation of planned interventions for each of the students (individualised support plans), monitoring activities will take place. The ESL prevention team together with school principal and school professional associates are in charge for monitoring of intervention implementation. The monitoring will be based on the following:

- Baseline data as attendance rate, academic achievement etc. (to be compared with data after intervention)
- The achievement of the set goals for the student (agreed by student and drop-out team/teacher)
- Strategies to achieve the goal for each relevant criteria
- Activities to undertake for each relevant criteria
- The person responsible for monitoring each student's case (case manager)
- The timeline for the implementation of activities for each relevant attribute
- The progress and results achieved for activities conducted for each attribute.
- Implementation of designed Individual Support Plan will be monitored using already prepared protocol and reporting forms, assessing also functionality and efficiency of established school procedures.

6. *Evaluation of the effects of interventions* - ESL prevention team together with school principal and

	school professional associates are, also, in charge for evaluation of intervention effects. They undertake evaluation by using created forms/questionnaires, mix of quantitative (developed indicators for evaluation of the model implementation) and qualitative data.
	7. *EWS supplementary activities on school level.* Apart of establishment of the Early Warning and Intervention System (EWIS) and its implementation, numbers of activities are implemented at the whole institutions level and involve capacity building of teachers, strengthening of involvement of parents, peers (fellow students) and development of a new concept of remedial teaching. Parental engagement consists of a) parents empowerment b) involvement of the parents and c) parents networking (e.g. involving parents of children at risk of dropping out in Parent Council and functioning of the School Board).Peer support includes the following: peers capacity building for prevention of dropping out; and empowerment of the students to be kind of mentors to students at risk of dropping out in processes of socialisation and learning.
	8. *Capacity building and activities targeted at changing school culture.* This Component should have an impact on the whole school practices since it is focused at strengthening the schools competence and in that way contributes to the change of overall organizational culture, especially to reaching higher sensitivity of school employees for early identification, adequate response and support to pupils at risk of drop out and ESL.
	The Drop-out prevention model/project is included as one of the examples of good practices selected by the European Commission in their newly developed online <u>European Toolkit for Schools</u> (EU Open Method of Coordination group / School Policy). This new platform, offers examples, concrete ideas and other resources for improving collaboration within, between and beyond schools with a view to more inclusive education and early school leaving prevention.
12. Contact and website/link	UNICEF in Serbia - Tanja Rankovic, UNICEF Serbia, <u>trankovic@unicef.org</u> <u>http://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/en/pub/resources/toolkitsforschools/area.cfm?a=1</u>