EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING DURING SECOND CYCLE OF COMPULSORY SECONDARY EDUCATION

Early school leaving during Second Cycle of Compulsory Secondary Education

Research Report

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0. Foreword

One of the main objectives of the Basque education system is the inclusivity, and allowing our students to achieve levels of success that are really within their reach. However, this means that students have to attend school. There are several initiatives to tackle leaving school early, driven by the education authorities, regional councils and local authorities. This research on school leaving has brought some important issues to the forefront. Firstly, that the schemes or measures put in place by the Inspectorate have worked well, and this has led to a rate of school leaving in the Basque Country that is extremely low, not eradicated but very low.

Secondly, we have been able to improve the measures set up thanks to coordination between research and intervention.

Research into this problem allowed us to take part at a European Forum of regions and communities - the PREVALET programme, as it is fundamental to foster policies based on data. In this regard, the research we are presenting will help us to unveil our good practices in Europe.

There is very little reliable data on this problem in European towns and cities. This is our humble contribution.

We must look after the right to an education as this ensures the future, in spite of having a low number of "defeatist" students, because the effects of leaving school early, including marginalisation and academic failure, are serious.

The protocol to be followed by schools in these cases of leaving school early is not the only important component. The system has preventive measures to keep students at school and guarantee them a better future.

The purpose of this research is not to applaud the excellent work of the Basque educational system but to show that the right to education of the vast majority of students is respected and to combine forces to perform better in areas where there is still room for improvement. Many challenges lie ahead.

Tontxu Campos Granados

Minister for Education, Universities and Research
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I. INTRODUCTION

Lack of schooling, absenteeism and leaving the educational system during the obligatory period of education infringe the right to education that everybody has in our society. The fact that leaving school early and absenteeism generally takes place without having obtained a basic academic qualification is also, a factor in social exclusion. This phenomenon is therefore not only a serious problem for the educational system, but for society as a whole.

This is of general concern in the European education system and has led to studies being carried out on the measures in different countries to prevent the dysfunction that will occur in the event of having a population without the necessary skills to lead a professional life in the mainstream.

Within the European sphere, this concern has led to different measures, *inter alia* the PREVALET[1] project created by the European Association of Regional and Local Authorities for Life (EARLALL), the aim of which is to promote exchange of innovative experiences between the different European regional governments. This project attempts to produce a quality model for educational policies and is based on an open method of coordination with informative and comparative aims and exchange of educational innovation. The educational policies on which these experiences are to be taken from at this stage are: the scope of school leaving during compulsory education as well as unofficial education for adults.

The framework of this PREVALET project, featuring participation from communities or regions of 10 European countries, including the Basque Country, is the trigger for this study.

Knowledge of the measures set up in different countries and their efficiency in preventing abandonment of the educational system prior to the period of compulsory education finishing, is somewhat important as the phenomenon of premature abandonment is very often associated to cases of academic failure. Although not all academic failures are associated to leaving school early, we can state that almost all students that do not complete compulsory education find themselves in a situation of academic failure.

Faced with this phenomenon, society has built a resolute standing. Academic failure and leaving school early is considered as something that is not restricted to the educational context and is tied to school age, but rather also includes surrounding factors: family, colleagues, school, etc. *"The social representation fundamentally points to the ideas that a specific social group shares with regard to a specific social phenomenon (...) social representations are immersed in the world of relationships, intersubjectivity and awareness (...) a great many dimensions are bound -cognitive, effective, social and evaluative- which individuals express through their experience, their communication and their social relations".[2]*

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[1] PREVALET: Policies for Regional Valorisation of Education and Training.

[2] Alvaro Marchesi and Carlos Hernandez Gil. (2003*). El fracaso escolar. Una perspectiva internacional (Academic failure – an international perspective)*. Madrid. Alianza editorial.

Social representation of leaving school early and of the subsequent *"academic failure"* is not of a universal nature, but rather tied to each society, to each social group and to a historical timeline. From this point of view, both academic failures as well as leaving the educational system during the obligatory period are social phenomena tied to the appearance of an institution in our societies in charge of generating specific learning within a group of a certain age: compulsory education.

Currently, and in our society, the abandonment of the obligatory educational system without the corresponding qualification is not something that is limited to the academic sphere, but also has consequences that affect everybody by conditioning their personal and future options, placing them at the risk of marginalisation in their jobs and social life. The basic qualification is currently considered as an essential requirement, not only to be able to continue with higher studies but to favour of socio-employment integration with a minimum of conditions in a society undergoing ongoing technological development.

One characteristic of the knowledge society is the need for constant adaptation to new educational content and, therefore, the need to educate people that can generate skills to develop ongoing training throughout their lives. "*Despite the fact that a relative percentage of students that fail at school manage to find jobs and achieve social integration, their difficulties in progressing professionally and tackling social and employment changes are far greater.(...) To prevent students leaving the educational procedure and reincorporating them are the main objectives of the programmes that fight against academic failure", (*Marchesi 2003)

We must also mention the latest theories behind the phenomenon of leaving school early or absenteeism, perceived as an indicator that there are other problems that could have a serious effect on the absent student. These theories maintain that in certain cases, there may be a problem of abuse, desertion or school bullying. In fact, many of the situations are only visible within an academic context and it is thanks to the school becoming aware of these situations that we are able to establish rigorous interventions to make sure that all students remain at school.

There are different theories when it comes to analysing the reasons behind absenteeism and leaving school early. One initial focus has looked almost exclusively at the individual without almost any consideration of other social, political or organisational references that could play a part. This perspective has led to exploration of issues such as the characteristics of the students that leave, especially within the North American context, by defining risk factors associated to these students (Lee and Burkhan, 2001). The category of *academic risk* include aspects concerning lower qualifications, low educational expectations, early repetition of the course, disciplinary problems, etc., on the grounds that they predict future difficulties at school, such as absenteeism, "disconnecting" from classes and finally abandoning school.

More in-depth focuses on the issue question the research centred on risk factors of the students, especially because of the trend to overlook the organisational context within which the student is educated, and fail to observe the triggering role that the educational context may have, apart from individual and family situations. This focus incorporates the environment closer to the individual -including the educational context- and broadens the analysis to the school, its policies and practices with regard to modifying approaches and organisational practices. This consideration considers school leaving from the multicausal perspective, not only with an educational projection (leaving school early) but also includes the social aspect (possibilities of employment,

personal, social and professional promotion, etc.). The quest for solutions to eradicate school leaving without securing the minimum qualification is obviously tied to the definition and focus that address the problem.

With regard to the latter focus, which believes that abandonment is a problem that has a repercussion on the student, but is deeply rooted in the social and educational elements, the CIDE[3] carried out a study in which a series of school measures are mentioned that merit consideration in the search for solutions. They are the following:

(...) *providing the conventional focal points of how it is dealt with are amended. Our approach entails another teaching culture (...) The following aspects would constitute some of the features of this different culture, which puts forward:*

- *Instead of considering risk students as a classroom problem, to consider them as a team responsibility, with possibilities for improvement.*
- *Instead of understanding absenteeism as a personal problem, to involve Form Tutors and the like to introduce socio-affective factors of another kind.*
- *Instead of dealing with this solely from the school, to consider it from the cultural capital available at any given place.*
- *Also to consider redefining the tools used to deal with the problem, its conceptualisation, the focus given to the diagnostics, to reconsider the role of the school in this diagnostics and intervention process, address the manners of accessing knowledge.*

State of the issue

Definition of concepts

The problem of absenteeism and leaving school early has not really been studied in a systematic and rigorous way. There are relatively few studies that refer to the measurement of school leaving in a way that gives us actual figures. The bibliography is more abundant when analysing under what circumstances it occurs, the situations that can lead to this, its multi-causality, etc. Existing studies show multiple definitions on abandonment and absenteeism and each piece of research that measures the concept establishes nuances that hamper comparison.

In order to be able to interpret the data available in the Basque Country, the definition given below shows exactly what is considered as leaving school early, both in the reports from the Inspectorate of Educational as well as the study data.

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[3] CIDE: Research and Educational Documentation Centre (2005) "*El absentismo escolar como reto para la calidad educativa*" (school absenteeism as a challenge for educational quality). Madrid. Spanish Ministry of Education and Science.

Definitions given in the reports from the Technical Inspectorate of Education[4]

> ***Definition of lack of schooling***: *This is the situation of minors between the ages of compulsory schooling (6-16) for those that have not enrolled at a school. This concept also includes the situation of minors when there are 100% of unjustified absences even though they are enrolled.*

> ***Definition of 99.9% absenteeism***: *Lack of ongoing attendance at school without a justified reason, consented or provided by the family or through the will of the student in the case of pre-adolescents or adolescents. The range in this case is as follows: between 75% and 99.9% of days (given that 100% is included in the foregoing definition) without attending school.*

Definition of school leaving in this research

> ***Definition of school leaving:*** *This refers to students that are enrolled at the school at the beginning of the academic year and have not attended on any days for a least one month prior to the gathering of data and have not requested transfer of their academic records at any time in order to continue their studies at another school.*

In order to compare the data we have set up a parallel structure between the definitions and compared the rates of school leaving from the research with those given in the reports prepared by the Technical Inspectorate of Education and which refers to absenteeism of 99.9% plus the rates corresponding to students with 100% absenteeism, including those that are of a school age and have not enrolled at any school.

➢ *Situation in Europe*

Although the details set forth hereunder are not comparable with those of this research they can be used as a reference to take a closer look at the situation of educational systems in different European countries.

At the European Council of Lisbon in March 2000, the aim with regard to school leaving was set at managing to reduce the number of persons between 18 and 24 whose maximum level of studies is basic secondary education by half. The target of 10% by 2010 was set.

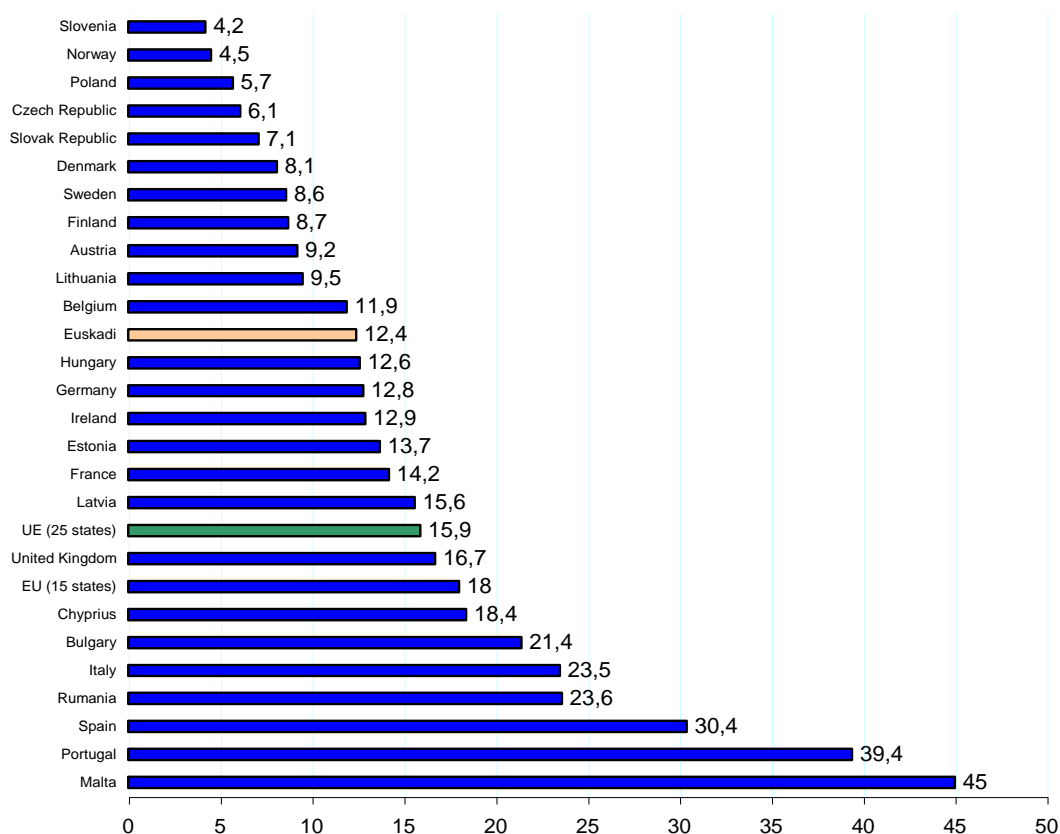In 2004, the average of the countries that make up the EU was 18% of students that did not continue their studies once they had finished the compulsory period[5], although

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[4] Control over absenteeism from school. Report from the CAPV. Years: 2004-05 and 2005-06. Inspectorate of Education

[5] Population between 18-24 that did not receive any kind of educational or training activity in the four weeks prior to the survey.

this went down to 15.9% with the inclusion of 10 new countries. Only 11 of the countries have reached the objectives set for 2010, as shown in the following table. These are Nordic countries and some from Eastern Europe.

Percentage of abandonment between the population of 18 to 24 (2004)[6]

In the Basque Country, 12.4% of the population between 18 and 24 left education during the post-obligatory educational period in 2004, 2.4 points above the target set and 3.5 points below the average of the 25 countries that make up the European Union. A breakdown by sex of the students that left between the ages of 18 and 24 shows that males are the main protagonists with 16.5%, while females are below the 10% set as the target for 2010.

These data are very similar to those given in the "Education at a Glance 2006" report prepared by the OECD (Organisation for Economic Corporation and Development) that refers to the 2003-04 school year. In Europe, the average rate of leaving school is 15.2%. Countries with the lowest percentage include Poland with 5.5%, Sweden with 8.6% and Finland with 9.3%.

According to data for the 2003-04 academic year, within the European Union Portugal is the country with the highest rate of abandonment, with 38.6% of students leaving the educational system without finishing their mandatory studies. Of this percentage, 22.3% represents boys, and 35.4% girls. At the other extreme, there are 10 countries that have achieved the 10% target set by the European Council. These are shown in the table.

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[6] ISEI-IVEI 2005. Basque System of Educational Indicators. Premature school leaving. www.isei-ivei.net

➢ *Situation in Spain*

The rate of abandonment in post-obligatory secondary education (18-24) in 2000 was 28.8%, 10 points higher than the European Union (19%).[7] In 2004 this had increased to 30.4% and by 2005 had reached 31.1%.

Percentage of students that leave post-obligatory secondary education
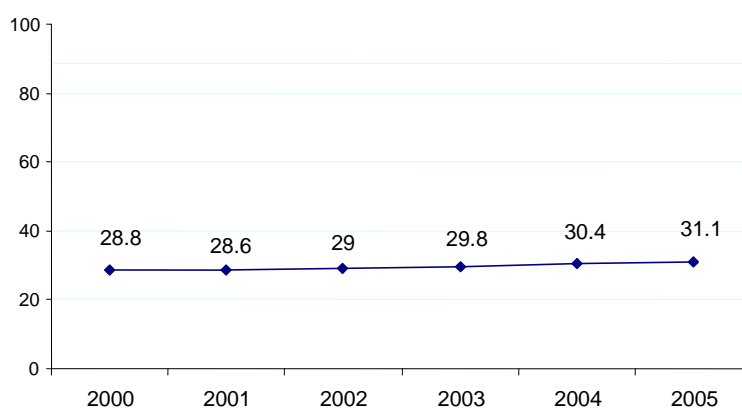
OECD countries
Percentage of students that complete post-obligatory secondary education at the normal age[8]

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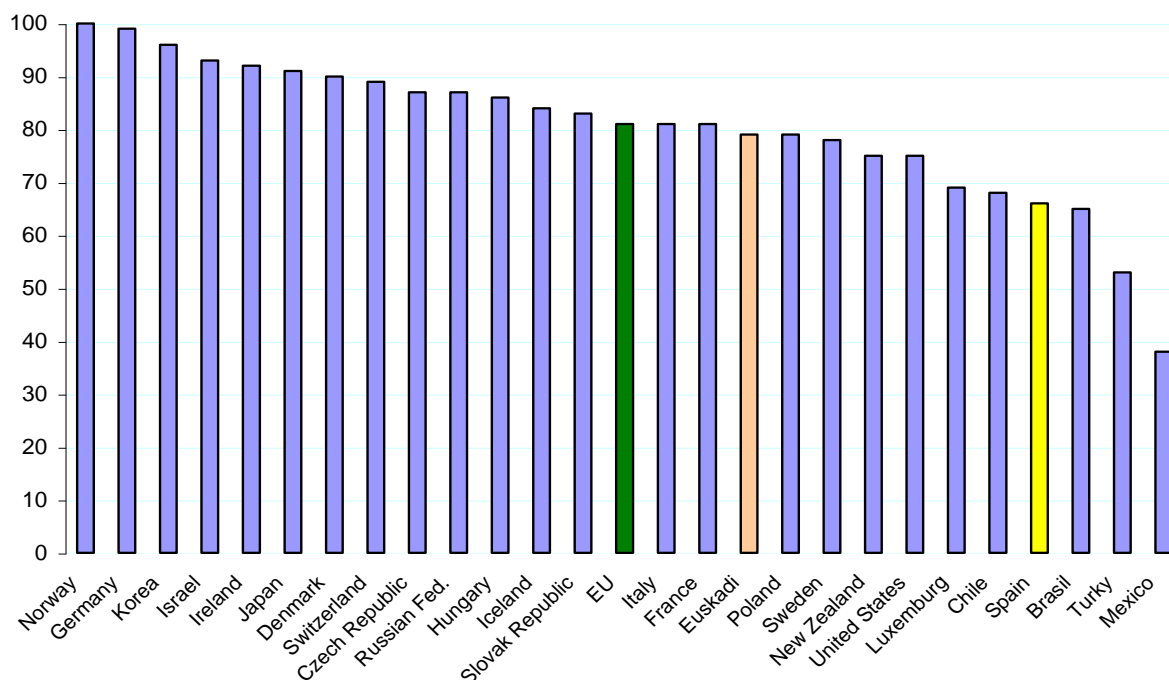
[7] Meeting of Education Ministers held in Brussels on 25 November 2003. www.consumer.es/web/es/educacion

[8] Education at a Glance 2006. Chapter A The output of Educational Institutions and the impact of learning

According to the "Education at a Glance 2006" report, in 2003-04 only 66% of students in Spain completed their pre-university education or intermediate level educational courses at the corresponding age, versus 81% on average in the countries that make up the OECD. In the Basque Country, 79.38%[9] of students enrolled in the course that corresponds to their age completes post-obligatory secondary education, ranking Spain as the third country below the average, as shown in the following chart. Spain ranks fourth with the lowest percentage of students that complete this course of teaching.

➢ *Situation in the Basque country*

In the period between 1992-2004 there was a positive trend in the Basque Country regarding this indicator, moving from a rate of abandonment of 25.4% down to 12.4%, as shown in the general table of abandonment between the ages of 18 to 24. In the case of girls (8.1%) the rate is below the target set for 2010 at the European Council of Lisbon, while the rate for boys is 16.5%, 6 points above the 10% set by the European Council.

Percentage of abandonment between the population of 18 to 24 (-24)[10]

Year	TOTAL	GIRLS	BOYS
1992	25.4	22.6	28.2
1993	23.1	17.2	29
1994	18.8	14	23.4
1995	18.2	13.6	22.7
1996	15.4	11.9	18.7
1997	16.6	13.6	19.5
1998	15.6	11.5	19.5
1999	13.9	10.3	17.4
2000	14	8.8	19.2
2001	15.1	9.5	20.5
2002	12.6	8.1	17.1
2003	14.5	11.3	17.6
2004	12.4	8.1	16.5

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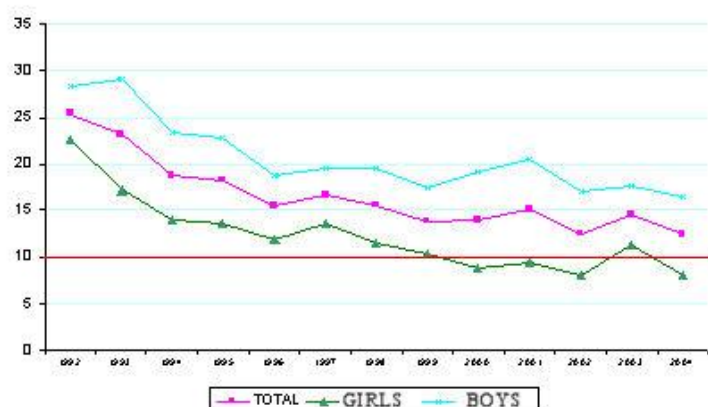
[9] Data from the Inspectorate of Education of the Basque Country referring to the 2003-04 academic year
[10]ISEI-IVEI (2005). Basque System of Educational Indicators. Early School Leaving

Although the data cannot be compared, these percentages of abandonment during the period of post obligatory teaching are far higher than those gathered in obligatory secondary education in the two reports on *"Control of school absenteeism"* carried out by the Inspectorate of Education in the 2004-05 and 2005-06 academic years, which are around 1%:

Percentage of students with absenteeism and lack of schooling (6-16)

	2004-05	2005-06
Primary Education	0.75	0.8
E. S. O.	1.32	1.3

These reports include students that do not attend school (100% absenteeism + and not enrolled at an obligatory age), as well as the students that have incurred absenteeism at a rate that is equal to or greater than 25% of the course time.

Legislative development in the Basque Country

The Basque Country, in accordance with its terms of reference in educational matters, regulates the performance and organisation of schools at a non-university level, and this is shown in the following regulations:

The Basque State Schooling Act dated 19 February 1993 defines itself and each one of its centres as:

> *"plural, bilingual, democratic, at the service of Basque society, socially and culturally rooted in its environment, participatory, compensatory of inequality and integrator of diversity"*

> And it attributes *"the take-up of measures required to ensure the proper right to education"* to *"the public authorities of the self-governing region of the Basque Country within the sphere of its respective terms of reference" (Art. 5)*

Decree 169/1994, dated 19 April, governing rights and duties of students at non-university teaching centres of the self-governing region of the Basque Country (art. 21) defines studies as a basic duty of students; this basic duty is specified in different obligations, including:

> "*attending class, taking part in the activities agreed within the school calendar and respecting the established timetables".*

The Order of 30 July 1998 issued by the Department of Education, Universities and Research, which regulates educational action for students in underprivileged social or cultural situations and the measures for educational intervention for students with serious difficulties in adapting to schooling. Chapter I of this order (Art. 2) defines the following situations, *inter alia*:

> *"Situations of non-adaptation to schooling which are usually reflected in school absenteeism and in difficulties with the educational environment tied to belonging to an underprivileged socio-cultural class"*

13

Chapter II of this order defines general actions, including:

"developing programmes to tackle absenteeism from school, promote health, hygiene, social habits, together with the local authorities and regional councils where necessary".

The risk situations of minors and their vulnerability can reveal different levels of intensity that require specific intervention. Because of this, on 8 February 2001 an inter-institutional Agreement was reached, signed by the Basque Government, regional councils and EUDEL[11], which sowed the seeds for the subsequent Decree 155/2001 dated 30 July in which the functions in issues of social services are set forth. The aforementioned decree distributes intervention of public services over two levels:

1- Intervention at a primary level from fundamental social services in cases of slight or moderate vulnerability
2- Intervention of specialised services in cases of serious vulnerability, given sufficient powers for the purpose of "setting up operations to reduce the situation of the risk" or, if desertion is involved, to assume guardianship (Art. 17 and 18 of the aforementioned law)

These terms of references are attributed to the local authorities with regard to their decision taking and executive aspect by virtue of the governing law in this region (Law 27/1983, dated 25 November).

To sum up, there are three authorities in the Basque Country that intervene in the problem of school absenteeism:

- The Department of Education, Universities and Research of the Basque Government, ensuring full effectiveness of the right to education.
- The Regional Councils, through their terms of reference in issues of protection of minors, operating in individual situations of absent students. It is also a problem with roots and consequences that are eminently social and which require profound social content measures to be adopted.
- The Local Authority departments that are obliged to collaborate by virtue of Law 7/1985 dated 2 April, regulating the local rules, which includes a specific term of reference of the municipalities in its Article 25.2 *"to participate in overseeing compliance with obligatory schooling"*

Educational schemes implemented in the basque country

All of the schemes in development that are mentioned below have been set up for the purpose of preventing situations of not attending school and the academic failure that can be generated by personal, family or socio-cultural reasons, above all, in underprivileged social and cultural centres. Through these programmes, adapted syllabuses are set up, organised in an extraordinary way in which they are targeted at facilitating students' motivation to learn. The final purpose of all of these is to prepare the conditions to achieve qualification in Obligatory Secondary Education.

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[11] EUDEL: Association of Basque Municipalities

Main programmes implemented

1. Programme to ensure the rights to education: eradication of lack of schooling and school absenteeism
2. Project for specific educational intervention in schools in underprivileged areas
3. Complementary schooling programmes
4. Curricular diversification programme
5. Educational support
6. Diversity and coexistence programmes

1. Programme to ensure the right to education: eradication of lack of schooling and school absenteeism

It is a scheme agreed between the Department of Education, Universities and Research of the Basque Government, the Department of Social Action of the Regional Councils and the Association of Basque Municipalities (EUDEL). It attempts to combine the efforts of professionals from educational, social and judicial spheres. It includes preventive and organisational measures together with the implementation of an agreed action protocol.

The aims of the programme are:
- To ensure fulfilment of the right to education of all minors from 6 to 16 years of age in the Basque Country through the levels of basic education.
- To stimulate the behaviour of families that stem from underprivileged social means to send minors from 3 to 6 years old to school.
- To raise awareness of the seriousness of this issue with the professionals involved, society in general and particularly those directly affected.
- To issue a general report from the Basque country to the Sub-department of Education to enable the opportune decisions to be taken.

2. Project for Specific Educational Intervention at schools in underprivileged areas (PIE)

These projects are targeted at students with special educational needs tied to belonging to underprivileged social or cultural class or through serious problems in school adaptation at schools that do not have a Global Intervention Project.

The aim is to respond through specific actions that involve the modification of various aspects of the curriculum, organisation and/or modus operandi of the PCC (school curriculum project).

Approval requires the preparation of a Centre Project targeted at dealing with students under the age of 16 and in the initial ESO course, with serious academic deficiencies and/or serious problems concerning school behaviour. This project lasts for two academic years and includes, *inter alia*, actions that affect the structure of the period, the syllabus and the organisation of the course.

3. Complementary schooling programmes

These programmes offer the opportunity to study ESO temporarily at specific units outside the enrolment centre, placing special efforts on the most useful aspects to enable re-adaptation of the student towards the ordinary system or to facilitate

access to adulthood and an active life, with a syllabus adapted to their needs and without waiving the basic skills of ESO.

This is a temporary individual programme that is implemented outside of the ordinary schooling context. It is targeted at students between the ages of 14 and 16, with serious problems of school adaptation and when the ordinary and extraordinary services of the school have been insufficient.

4. Curricular diversification

These programmes offer a different way of studying the second cycle of ESO and are targeted at students between the ages of 16 and 18 who, following a psychopedagogical assessment, may achieve the general objectives of this period by means of an adapted programme. In general these are students with a positive attitude towards studying and schooling.

These are programmes that last one or two years for students that form a group, where the majority of the areas are integrated with in two spheres: linguistic-social and scientific-technological. These areas are taught for a minimum of 18 hours by the same teacher, with the remaining areas being studied in the ordinary group.

The centres have a base programme of curricular diversification and set the individualised programme of each student on the basis of the psychopedagogical assessment carried out previously by the guidance counsellor service. The tutoring procedure, which comprises a basic element of these programmes, is used to monitor learning and the individual and group difficulties.

5. Educational support

This deals with the ordinary, individual and collective educational measures, designed by teaching staff and targeted at helping students with their ordinary schooling difficulties. Two types of measures are considered:

- Group educational support, of a preventive nature in those areas in which the group has most difficulties.
- Individualised educational support, for those that need help in one or more areas.

The centres set up an educational support plan, that sets the organisational means and which forms part of the Centre's annual plan.

6. Diversity and coexistence programme

This comprehensive programme includes a programme for the "Improvement of schooling for Gypsy students", carried out by a specific team of educators that works in these areas.

All these measures accompany the Instructions from the Sub-Ministry of Education, targeted at State and State-assisted schools of the Basque Country in order to request authorisation for the implementation of each one of these projects in each academic year.

Research aims

This aims of this research are:

- With regard to students:

- Measuring school leaving, in accordance with the definition given, at the third and fourth levels of Obligatory Secondary Education.

- With regard to the schools:

- To describe the control measures of the educational system.
- To describe the organisational and preventive and corrective didactic measures of these schools.

Finally, this study seeks to respond to a series of issues shown hereunder:

➢ Is a low rate of school abandonment maintained in the last two years of ESO?
➢ Are the measures put forward by the Inspectorate of Education to prevent and correct absenteeism and lack of schooling complied with at schools?
➢ Are the individualised attention programmes or measures implemented at schools to retain students useful?
➢ Is there a relationship between the implementation of control and prevention measures at schools and the existence of the students that are at risk of leaving?

Methodological features

This research is based on an analysis of the data collected in the questionnaire designed by the ISEI-IVEI and targeted at the management boards of schools included in this sample of the PISA 2006 international assessment.

Data analysis makes comparisons between the centres that have students who have abandoned the educational system during the year in which the questionnaire applies and those that have not had any case of abandonment.

Analyses are also carried out in which the comparison is established between the measures taken within the centre depending on whether the students are considered ordinary or at risk, with school abandonment taken as the prevailing reference to define this point.

- **Sample**

The sample of this research comprises 137 schools that carried out the PISA 2006 international assessment. This is a representative sample of 15-year old students in the Basque Country.

Despite not being a sample elaborated specifically for this research, it enables an across-the-board vision of the situation at ESO schools.

The total number of third and fourth year students undergoing obligatory secondary education refers to the total of 137 schools in the sample for the 2005-06 academic year. This information was provided by the Department of Education of the Basque Government, Educational Statistics Service.

Characteristics of the sample:

Schools by territories

Territories	Schools
Araba	18
Bizkaia	70
Gipuzkoa	49
Total	137

All students of the sample

Territories	Third and fourth year students
Araba	2,561
Bizkaia	8,620
Gipuzkoa	5,516
Total	16,697

Sample schools and students by type of school

Network	Schools
State	58
State-assisted	79
Total	137

Network	Third and fourth year students
State	7,026
State-assisted	9,671
Total	16,697

- **Information gathering instrument**

The information has been gathered by means of questionnaires filled in by the Head Teachers of the schools. The data required referred to the students in the second year of ESO. Most information referred to the following aspects:

- Number of students at the school that had not attended for at least the last month without any justified reason and had not requested transfer of their school records to continue studying elsewhere.
- Main causes or reasons that led to leaving school.
- Compliance with the control of absenteeism and lack of schooling measures required by the Department of Education.
- Measures implemented at the school to prevent the second year students of Obligatory Secondary Education from leaving the system prior to gaining the academic qualification.

The last two aspects are analysed with regard to whether the student is ordinary or at the risk of leaving school, as well as with regard to the schools themselves, in accordance with whether or not they have had students that have left the educational system.

II- DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

This research has used the questionnaire filled in by the management of 137 schools that make up the sample in the three historical territories of the Basque Country.

The data to be analysed refers to the students that left the educational system. This is defined as *those students that were enrolled in the third or fourth year of ESO at the school at the beginning of the 2005-06 academic year and have not attended on a single day at least in the month prior to filling in the questionnaire (May 2006) and have not requested the transfer of their school records at any time in order to continue their studies elsewhere.*

This chapter analyses the information collected in the questionnaires filled in by the school management and which provide us with information on:
  ▪ Global data on leaving school early within the Basque educational system.
  ▪ Data concerning leaving school early at the sample schools, the sex of the students, type of school, and abandonment by territory.
  ▪ Main causes or reasons that led to leaving school early.
  ▪ Control measures at schools and comparison of these between the ordinary student and the student at risk of leaving.
  ▪ Description and impact of the preventive programmes and measures.
  ▪ Comparison of the control and preventive measures between schools with and without students leaving.

1. Global data on leaving school early within the Basque educational system

The number of students studying the third and fourth year of Obligatory Secondary Education at the schools included in the sample for the 2005-06 academic year totals 16,697, according to information from the Educational Statistical Service of the Basque Government Department of Education.

Number of centres and students included in the sample by territories

Territories	Schools	Third and fourth year students
Araba	18	2,561
Bizkaia	70	8,620
Gipuzkoa	49	5,516
Total	137	16,697

Of the 137 schools included in the sample, as shown in the table, 106 do not have any students that have left education. In the remaining 31 schools there are students that have left compulsory education.

Percentage of students that have left by schools

Number that have left	Number of schools	Percentage
None	106	77.4
One	18	13.1
Two	9	6.6
Three or more	4	2.9
Five	1	0.7
Nine	1	0,7

Percentage of students leaving school by type of school
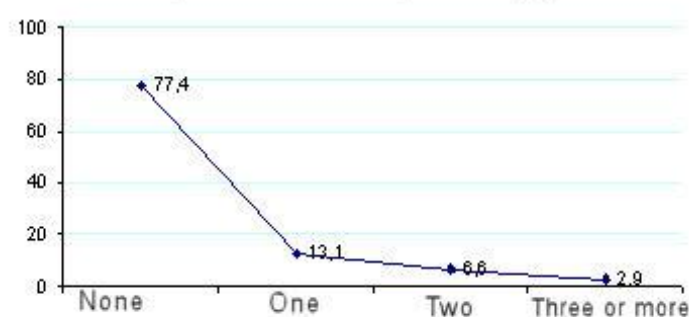
In 18 of the remaining 31, which correspond to 22.6% of the schools included in the sample, one student has left. At two schools there are five and nine students respectively that have abandoned the system prior to the obligatory period terminating for the 2005-06 academic year.

Percentage of students that have abandoned the system

Total ESO third and fourth year students	Number that have left	Percentage
16,697	56	0.34*

* typical error +/- 0.045. Calculated from our analysis that presupposes a *m.a.s.*

2. Sample data

From the total number of 16,697 students included in the sample of third and fourth year Obligatory Secondary Education students, 56 are students that have left the system, equivalent to 0.34% of the sample population.

Sex of the students that have left

Sex	Total number of students that have left
Boys	23
Girls	33

The number of girls that have left the educational system in the 2005/06 academic year, prior to its conclusion, is higher than the figure for boys. 59% of those that left school are girls.

Percentage of students leaving school by type of school

	Third and fourth year students	Students leaving	Percentage
State	7,026	28	0,40
State-assisted	9,671	28	0,29
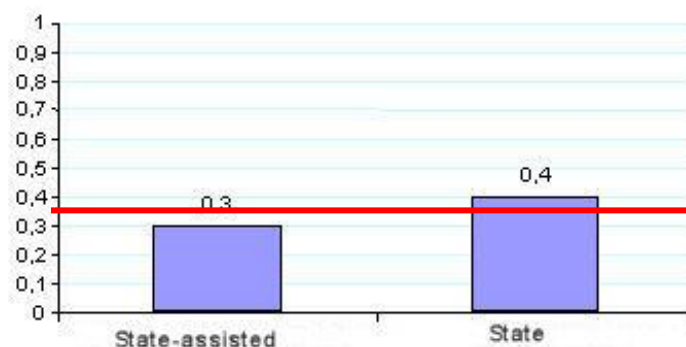
The average percentage of students that have left State schools is higher than the number that has left State-assisted schools, which are slightly below the overall average of the three territories.

Percentage of schools with students that have left by type of school

Network	Number of schools included in the sample	Number of schools where students have left	Percentage
State	58	13	22.4
State-assisted	79	18	22.8

22.4% of the State schools included in the sample have had students leave, and with regard to the State-assisted schools the percentage of schools that have been affected by this problem is 22.8%.

Reasons for leaving according to school management

The theoretical frameworks concerning leaving school early and absenteeism have been characterised by focusing almost exclusively on the individual, without taking into consideration other points of reference.

"*We have established what are normally referred to as risk factors (...). On the one hand we speak about social risk and, on the other, academic risk.(...). The greater the accumulation of social disadvantage linked with these factors the greater the risk of failure (Lee and Burkam 2001). The category of academic*

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risk includes aspects concerning problems at school such as poor marks, low educational expectations, early repetition of the course, disciplinary problems, etc. (...). It is understood that the non-positive solution to difficulties of this kind, which can appear in the student's early years, would have an accumulative effect." [12]

In this regard, A. Marchesi states the following*:*

"As has been made clear in all studies and research, academic failure and leaving school is a multicausal problem and has a wide variety of repercussions. Any analysis and attempt to reduce the problem to a specific causal factor is doubtless a partial and limited analysis. Concerning the fact that there are students that have difficulties in overcoming the demands of the school system, there are factors involved that are strictly individual and which can referred to very different spheres, from the cognitive to the motivational. There are also strictly educational factors involved, related to the academic content and demands, to the manner of working in the classroom, to the way of responding to the difficulties that some students may have. There are also factors concerning what we can call counter position of cultures between the family and the school that are involved (...). There are also broader social and cultural elements involved, from the training of teaching staff through to social attitudes and values, the role of television, etc.
As usually occurs with complex problems, these factors frequently act in a combined fashion". [13]

In the questionnaire completed by the school management, a series of possible reasons why students left was put forward. Only 31 centres in which there had been a case of abandonment during the academic year in course responded to this question, and so the opinion is restricted to 56 students and we cannot easily generalise this response to the total population that left school, although it does have an orientative value.

The degree of impact of each of the reasons or causes behind why the students left is shown on a scale of one to five (from no impact to a large impact). For the purpose of the analysis we have pooled these figures into a smaller scale; so value one remains as no impact, values two and three are considered as a medium impact and four and five as a high impact. The level of impact of each one of the main reasons for leaving school is shown in the table:

The reasons for the highest percentage of high impact concern problems of the students and their families. For more in-depth analysis, all of the reasons or causes for leaving school have been linked to the following environments:
- student's personal environment
- socio-family environment
- school environment

Only the high impact index has been taken into consideration in carrying out the analysis. The classification is as follows:

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[12] REICE- Latin American e-magazine on Quality, Efficiency and Change in Education. 2006. Vol. 4, No. 1
[13] Alvaro Marchesi. Carlos Hernández Gil (coordinators) El fracaso escolar. Una perspectiva internacional. Madrid. Alianza 2003.

Students' environment: personal reasons	High impact
Personal problems	64.5
No motivation for study	61.3
Academic failure	38.7
Lack of ability	19.4
Lack of affiliation to the school	16.1
Problems with other students	9.7
Accumulation of penalties	6.5
Problems with staff	0

Among the reasons of a personal nature, the lack of motivation and personal problems occupy the top spots, followed by academic failure, with lack of ability bringing up the rear.

Socio-family environment	High impact
Destructured family	58.1
Studies not considered important by the family	35.5
Underprivileged social class	22.6
Family mobility	12.9

According to the school management of those schools included in the sample, the reasons of a socio-family environment have also had a high impact on early abandonment of schooling, and within these the highest percentage corresponds to destructured family followed by studies not considered important by the family, which occupy third and fifth place in the general table

School environment	High impact
Imbalance between programmes and needs	19.4
School environment fails to stimulate	6.5
No tutorial action carried out	3.2
Low expectations of staff	-

The percentages linked to school environment causes are a lot lower and the first of these occupies the eighth place in the general table. We must remember that the analysis of the causes only refers to 56 students that have left.

Although it is appropriate for the analysis to compartmentalise the reality, when it comes to interpretation we must remember that a complex phenomenon such as education cannot be explained by a single factor. All of the factors given form part of the system and all the environments mentioned interact in such a way that students perceive them as an educational context that either favours or hinders their school lives. So, for example, the social environment, family life and the educational experience have a determining influence in the student's academic motivation. The capacities are influenced by the confidence or lack of confidence in own abilities, by self-esteem, etc., and these involve or regress according to the education experience

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of each student and are not necessarily determined by an intellectual level. To sum up, leaving school is the end product, the quest to find social recognition for what they do.

The chart shows reasons for leaving school organised by high impact percentages, according to the appraisal of the school management of those schools that have had students leave.

Reasons for leaving school early

Reason	Value
Low expectations of staff	0
Problems concerning staff	0
No tutorial action carried out	3,2
Accumulation of penalties	6,5
School environment not stimulating	6,5
Problems dealing with other students	9,7
Family mobility	12,9
Lack of connection with the centre	16,1
Imbalance between programmes and needs	19,4
Lack of abilities	19,4
Underprivileged social class	22,6
Failure by families to recognise the importance of studies	35,5
Academic failure	38,7
Destructured family	58,1
Lack of motivation towards studies	61,3
Personal problems	64,5

■ Socio-family environment   ■ School environment   ■ Students' environment

Among these reasons, the first that refers to the school environment (19.4% impact) concerns the existing difference between the needs or interests of students and the programmes or syllabus offered to them.

Although in this research, school management does not appear to believe that the school environment has a very high impact on the cause of the school leaving. However, as we analyse in the second corresponding to specific programmes and preventive measures at schools (page 54), they make huge efforts to ensure the syllabus is adequate as well as affecting other aspects. As the aforementioned report from the Inspectorate states: "*34% of the management teams at these schools say the control could be improved with regard to absenteeism, improving the involvement of staff, above all Form Tutors, respecting the deadlines established, acting straight away whenever a problem is observed, strengthening relationships with the family and with the Gypsy associations, carrying out better control of students that move from one school to another.*"

3. Control measures at schools

➢ **Periodicity of collecting details on absent students**

Absences are recorded

	Schools	Percentage
Daily	118	86.1
Weekly	17	12.4
Not recorded	1	0.7
Don't know/No response	1	0.7
TOTAL	137	100
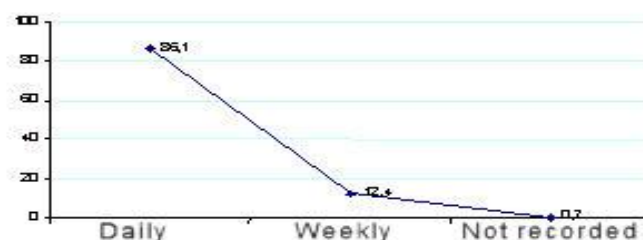
In 98.5% of schools included in the sample, absences are recorded daily or weekly and only one of the schools says this data is not recorded.

Percentage by type of school

	Daily	Weekly	Not recorded
State	75.9	22.4	-
State-assisted	93.7	5.2	1.3
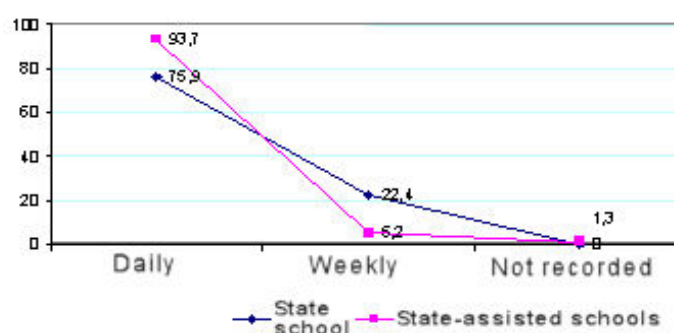
More than 75% of the schools, both public and when the State-assisted, record absences daily, although the percentage of schools belonging to the State-assisted network is far higher (93.7) than the public network, where 22% state they record these absences weekly.

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➢ **Absences notified to the school management**

Absences notified to the school management

	Schools	Percentage
Daily	33	24.1
Weekly	72	52.6
Not notified	21	15.3
Don't know/No response	11	8
TOTAL	137	100

Although the recording of absences is carried out by practically all the schools, 15% of these do not notify these absences to management, possibly because the organisation of the centre does not commission this control to the management but rather to the course coordinator or another person. 77% notify absences within a maximum period of one week.
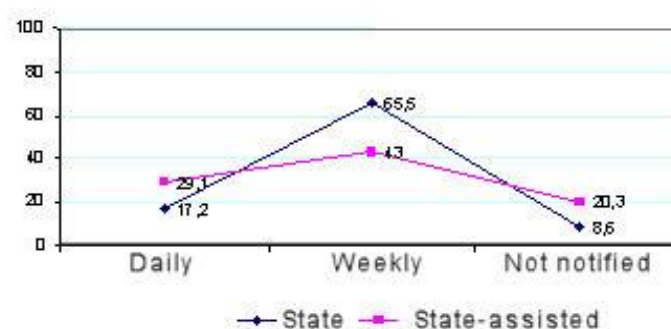
Percentage by type of school

	Daily	Weekly	Not notified
State	17.2	65.5	8.6
State-assisted	29.1	43	20.3

By type of centre, we observe that the time to notify absences to management is usually one week, and this percentage is far higher in State schools. Daily notification is 12 points higher at State-assisted schools than at State schools. The percentage of State-assisted schools that say they do not notify absences is 20%, and 7.6% did not respond. Only 8.6% of State schools say they do not notify absences and this same percentage failed to respond.

Measures concerning students

➢ **What we do with unjustified absences of students?**

By comparing the measures taken by the centres in order to respond to an absence or repeated absences, we see that there is a generalised increase in all actions when the situation is repeated. Yet the biggest difference in the percentages occurs in the derivations to other services and institutions and becomes geared towards the individual when the behaviour of students is repetitive. The percentage referring to the set-up of other unspecified measures is also considerably higher.

Comparative chart. School measures
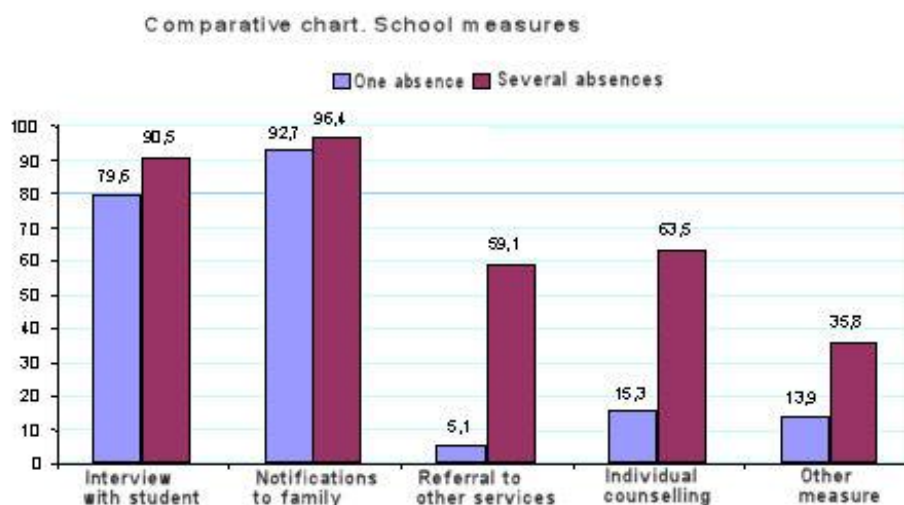
By comparing the measures taken at State and State-assisted schools we see the same trend, and the biggest difference (highest percentage in State schools) occurs in derivations to other services and institutions and becomes more individual when the conduct of students is repetitive. The percentage referring to the setup of other unspecified measures is also higher at State-assisted schools.

➢ **Number of absences required in order to interview students**

Number of absences required in order to interview students

From 1 to 3	83.9
from 4 to 6	9.6
7 or more	2.8
Don't know/No response	3.6
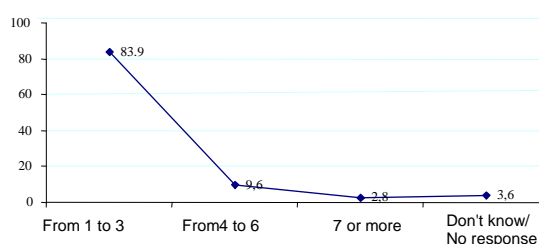
84% of schools only require one to three absences before staff interview the student. Generally speaking there is a rapid response to unjustified absences.

By analysing the data by type of school, the number of State-assisted schools that convene an interview with the student that has been absent one to three times is higher (88.6%) versus 77.5% of State schools.

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➢ **Who interviews the students?**

The existence of an established protocol for cases of student absenteeism is going to help the school, the wide range of professionals and the intervention and is going to avoid wasting time and effort caused through not having made it clear who is responsible for carrying out the interview in each case. In this analysis we distinguish between ordinary students and students at risk of leaving and we set up a comparison between the percentages of the measures in both cases.
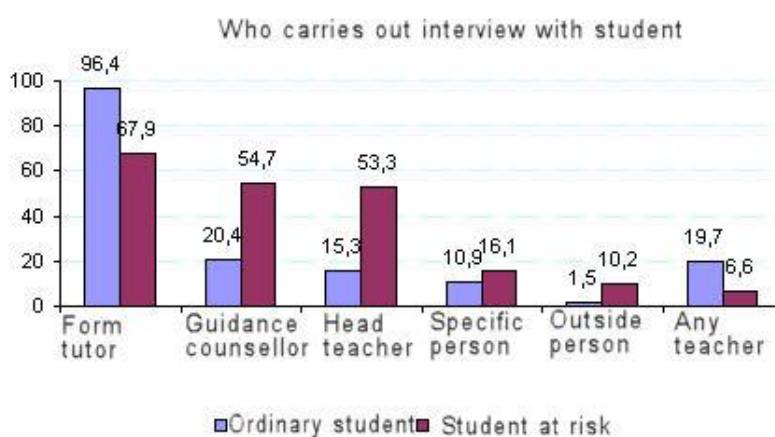
	Any teacher	Tutor	Specific person	Head teacher	Guidance counsellor	Outside person
Ordinary Student	19.7	96.4	10.9	15.3	20.4	1.5
Student of risk	6.6	67.9	16.1	53.3	54.7	10.2

The Tutor is the person that usually speaks with the ordinary student as well as the student that is a risk of leaving the system, followed in the case of the former by the Guidance Counsellor and any teacher in similar percentages. In the case of the student at risk by the Guidance Counsellor and the Head Teacher in excess of 50% in both cases.

While the interview with the ordinary student is the responsibility above all of the Form Tutors, when dealing with a student that is often absent or has a risk of leaving school a very high percentage state that this responsibility is given to the school management and the guidance counselling services, the latter most of all at State schools.

It seems that all schools do something (Form Tutor, management or guidance counselling) when there is a risk of the student leaving the educational system. This seems to initiate the procedure that is in line with or is mentioned in the document prepared by the CIDE[14] "*Instead of considering students at risk as a classroom problem, to consider them as a team responsibility, with possibilities of improvement*".

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[14] Research and Educational Documentation Centre (CIDE) (2005) "*El absentismo escolar como reto para la calidad educativa*" (School absenteeism as a challenge for educational quality). Spanish Ministry of Education and Science

Measures concerning the family

➢ **The time it takes for the school to notify the absence to the family**

To control absenteeism it is vital that the school looks for collaboration with the families to ensure that they are aware of the problem and help to eradicate the existing situation.

Period during which the school notifies the family of the absence. Percentage

	Ordinary student	Student at risk
1 day	43.1	73
2 days	27	13.1
3 days	14.6	2.9
4 days	11.7	2.9
5 or more	2.2	0.7
Don't know/No response	1.5	7.3
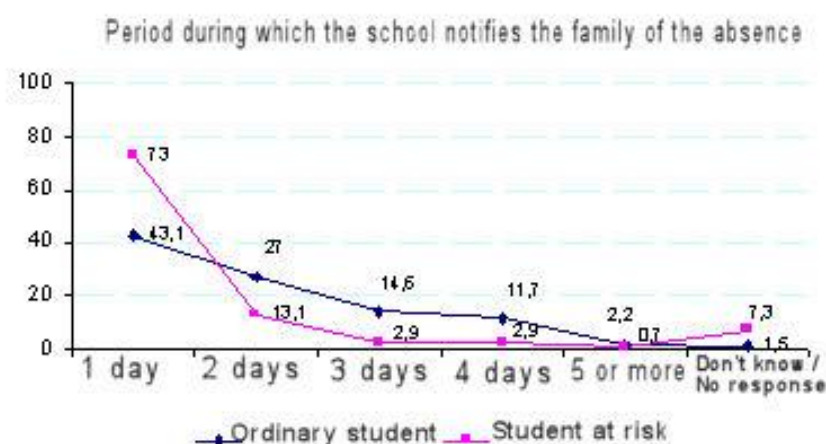
Both the family of ordinary students as well as the family of students at risk is notified within a maximum period of three days in 85% of cases. However, in 73% of the cases where the student is considered at risk of absenteeism or leaving school the family is notified within one day. This reveals more immediate intervention when dealing with students that are considered to be at risk of abandoning their studies. The highest percentage of the don't know/no response with regard to the students is possibly due to the schools that do not have this problem.

The same trend is maintained with ordinary students as well as students at risk of leaving school. However, in the latter case notification to the family has a higher percentage of being carried out within a period of one day and this occurs both in the State-assisted school network as well as the State school network.

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> **Methods of making contact with families**

What methods does the school use to notify the family of absenteeism? Is one method favoured over another depending on whether the student is at risk of leaving?
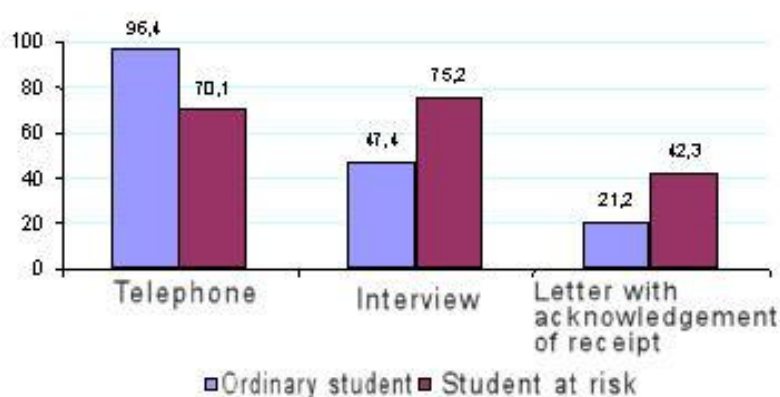
Channels of communication with the family. Percentage

	Phone	Letter with acknowledgement of receipt	Interview
Ordinary student	96.4	21.2	47.4
Student at risk	70.1	42.3	75.2

As the high percentages reveal, schools place great importance on contact with families to notify them that their children have been absent.

Telephone communication is the most usual way of notifying families of ordinary students. In the case of families with children at risk of leaving the education system, the most common method is to convene an interview followed up by telephone notification. The percentage of notification by letter with acknowledgement of receipt doubles in the case of students at risk and above all within the State school network (59% as against 30% of the State-assisted schools).

70.8% of schools have defined the reasons that justify student absences (97 of the 137 included in the sample). In 62% (85 schools) the reasons given by the families coincide with those included by the school as reasonable justification for absence.

The centre has defined the reasons for justified absences

	No.	Percentage
YES	97	70.8
NO	36	26.3
Don't know/ No response	4	2.9

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The reasons given by the family must coincide with those defined by the school

	No.	Percentage
YES	85	62.0
NO	35	25.5
DN/NR	17	12.4

> ## Who notifies the student's absence to their family?

The professional that notifies absences to the family. Percentage

	Any teacher	Form Tutor	Specific person	Headmaster/ headmistress	Guidance Counsellor	Outside person
Ordinary Student	9.5	94.9	13.1	12.4	9.5	1.5
Student at risk	3.6	86.1	18.2	43.8	25.5	5.8
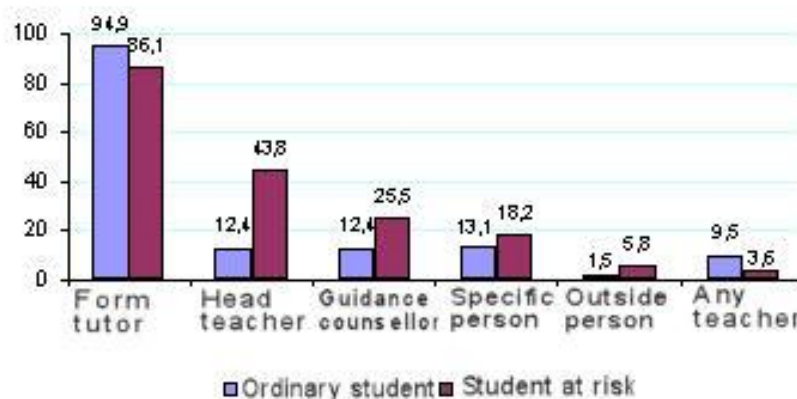
As occurs with the interview with the student, Form Tutors are the persons that usually make contact with families with regard to both the ordinary student as well as students that are at risk of abandoning the system. With students at risk of leaving the system, there is a trend towards this issue being dealt with by other professionals such as the school management, the Guidance Counsellor or even a person in charge of these issues at a school level.

It could be said that contact both with families of students at risk as well as with the students themselves that are in this situation has a sphere of intervention that is tied more to the school and less to the classroom.

> ## Purpose of making contact with the family

Purpose of making contact with the family. Percentage

	Notify the situation	Set up joint measures	Ask for measures to be taken	Notify the involvement of other services
Ordinary student	94.2	68.6	49.6	14.6
Student at risk	82.5	84.7	70.1	59.1

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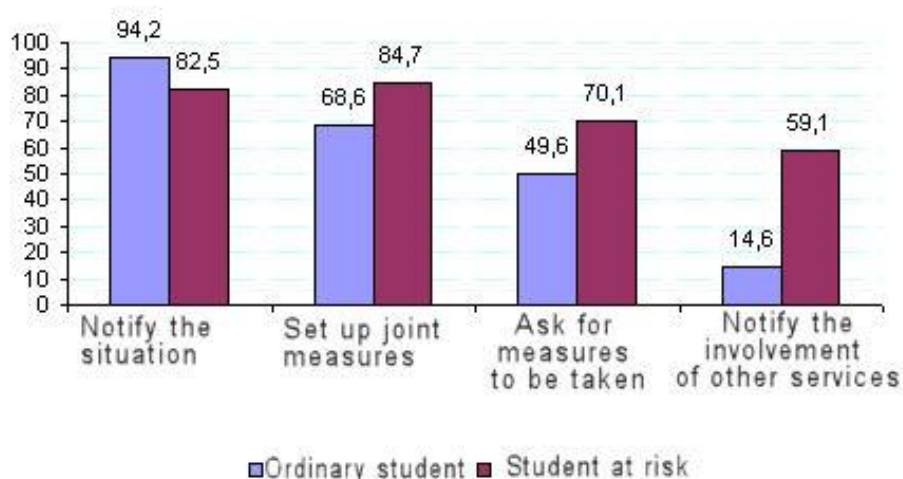
In more than half the cases of students at risk the family is notified of the involvement of other services and institutions as the previous measures of control have failed. The percentages requesting collaboration from the families are also far higher with students at risk.

The operation of schools is similar whether dealing with ordinary students or students at risk; however, the percentages, except in the case of meetings to notify the family of the situation, go up when dealing with students at risk of leaving the educational system.

➢ **Deadline to correct the situation**

The deadline to track the measures taken is set up Percentage

	Ordinary student	Student at risk
One week	38.7	39.4
2 weeks	4.4	8
3 weeks	0.7	0.7
One month	3.6	1.5
No deadline	46	38
Don't know/No response	6.6	12.4

Deadline established to review the situation
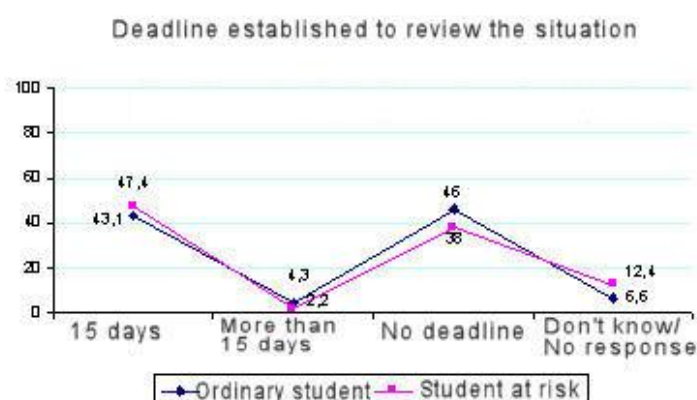
The period is established to monitor the problem of absenteeism or abandonment. This period is normally 15 days in 43.1% of the cases, with ordinary students. When the student is considered to be at risk, this figure rises to 47.4%.

Comparing the difference between schools that have students that leave and those that do not have this problem, the difference is two points and is around 50%; both with ordinary students as well as students at risk. The maximum deadline is one month for both kinds of schools.

The percentage of schools that do not set a monitoring period is extremely high (46% with ordinary students and 38% with students at risk).

The percentage of schools that do not know or do not respond is higher than in other issues, probably due to the fact that they are not affected by this situation.

Percentage of monitoring over one month established at schools with and without the problem of abandonment. Percentage

	Ordinary student	Student at risk
Schools with abandonment	48.4	51.6
Schools without abandonment	47.1	49

By comparing schools with and without abandonment and analysing whether there are differences between ordinary students and those of the risk of leaving we can see that there are barely any differences. At schools that have had students leave, monitoring takes place over a maximum period of one month in 48.4% of students without problems and 51.6% with regard to students at risk. This same swing occurs between the two kinds of students at the schools do not have the problem of school abandonment.

Summary table with a comparison of the school measures depending on whether dealing with ordinary students or students at risk of leaving

	Ordinary student	Student at risk of leaving
Interview with the student	Form tutor … 96% Head Teacher… 15% Guidance Counsellor … 20%	Form tutor... 68% Head Teacher … 53% Guidance Counsellor … 55%
The family is notified on the first day	In 43% of schools	In 73% of schools
Number of absences required to notify the family (from one to three absences)	In 87% of schools	In 87% of schools
Ways of making contact	Telephone … 96% Interview …47% Letter with acknowledgement of receipt 21%	Telephone … 70% Interview … 75% Letter with acknowledgement of receipt 42%
Communicates with the family	Form Tutor … 95% Head Teacher … 12% Guidance Counsellor … 12%	Form Tutor ……… 86% Head Teacher … 44% Guidance Counsellor … 26%

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Purpose of making contact	Notify the situation 94% Joint measures 69% Ask the family to take measures 50% Notify the involvement of other departments/services 15%	Notify the situation 83% Joint measures 85% Ask the family to take measures 70% Notify the involvement of other departments/services 59%
Monitoring period (maximum one month)	In 47% of schools	In 50% of schools

Generally speaking, the comparison between the measures taken by the schools when dealing with ordinary students or students at risk leads us to conclude that:

- The measures intensify and the periods shorten when dealing with students considered at risk of leaving the system.
- The intervention involves other school professionals in far greater measure without removing responsibility from the Form Tutor.
- The measures are more formal and require greater involvement of families.
- It is possible that one of the weakest points is that once these measures have been taken, the percentage of schools that follow up these does not exceed 50%.

Measures in collaboration with other services and institutions

We analyse how schools manage the absences of students and the kind of coordination that exists with other external services. The solution to this problem requires joint intervention of different institutions in order to set up corrective measures in cases of students that are absent without justified reasons or, given their history, are at risk of leaving the school system.

Communication with the Inspectorate of Education and the Local Authorities is performed in cases of repeated absenteeism, viz., when student absences exceed 20% of the monthly course timetable. The purpose is to set up control and external intervention measures at the school when it is considered that previous actions have not been sufficient to sort out the situation.

➢ **Communication to the Inspectorate of Education**

Communication of unjustified absences to the Inspectorate		
	No.	%
Prior to the fifth of each month	55	40
Throughout the month	18	13
Not sent	57	42
Don't know/No response	7	5.1
Total	137	100

The schools must collect and record class absences and a little more than half of the schools (53%) included in the sample send absences prior to the fifth of each month or during the month. However, 42% of school Head Teachers say that they do not send the unjustified absence report to the Inspectorate. Part of this percentage can be explained by the fact that some absent students are over the age of 16 and schools no longer have the obligation of including their absences on the registration sheets that are sent to the Inspectorate of Education.

As a complementary measure to the monthly Inspectorate controls, a corrective action has commenced in the 2006-07 academic year which includes the obligatory nature of carrying out the synthesis every quarter of absenteeism at schools and the interventions carried out to eradicate it. This quarterly synthesis of absenteeism and lack of schooling must be filled in and sent to all schools even if they do not have any entries to make.

Dispatch of unjustified absences to Inspectorate. % of schools
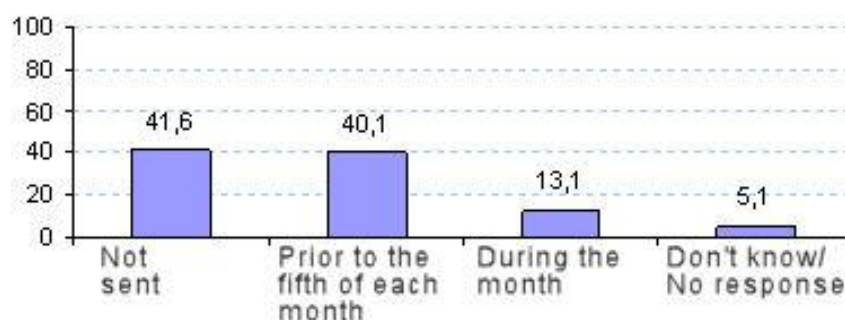
More than half of State schools send the student absent report prior to the fifth of each month, while 30% of the State-assisted schools included in the sample do so within this deadline.

➢ **Schools communication with other institutions**

When the schools believe that the problem persists they notify the situation to different institutions, using a variety of channels and methods, many times in order to pass the case on to other services/levels.

The most frequent institutions involved are the Social Services of Local Authorities[15] and personnel from the local Department of Education. The Regional Councils, and notification with their Social Services, are used with less frequency, probably because it is very extreme action that is reserved for very serious cases of absenteeism and lack of schooling which, logically, are rarer.

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[15] In Bizkaia and Gipúzkoa they are sent to the Social Services of the Local Authorities at the same time as they are sent to the Inspectorate of Education.

Who is notified if the problem persists?	No.	%
Local Authority (Social services)	98	71.5%
Specific person of local Department of Education	87	63.5%
Regional Councils (Social services)	20	14.6%
No service is notified	8	5.8%

Communication with other services
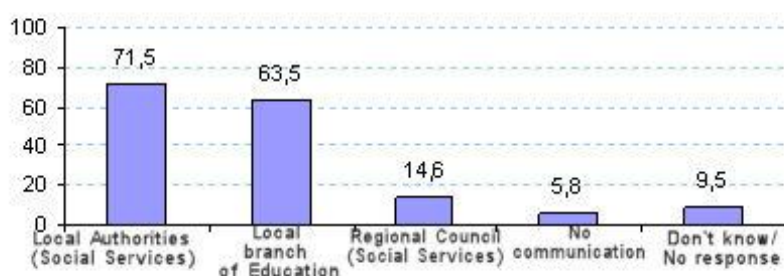
The percentage of State schools that notify other institutions of these situations is higher than the percentage of State-assisted schools, especially the relationships established with the social services of the Public Authority or with personnel from the local Department of Education.

When it comes to dealing with other services outside the school, and this involves students with problems of absenteeism, 59.1% of schools included in the sample use a standard report to forward cases to the corresponding external institutions or services. The percentage of State schools that use it (65.5%) is somewhat higher than the percentage of State-assisted schools (54.4%). There are practically no differences between the territories.

> **Information from institutions on forwarded cases**

Percentage of schools that receive information from institutions

	Number of centres	%
Local Authority	91	81.9
Inspectorate of Education and local offices	79	71.1
Regional Council	30	27

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% of schools that receive information from institutions
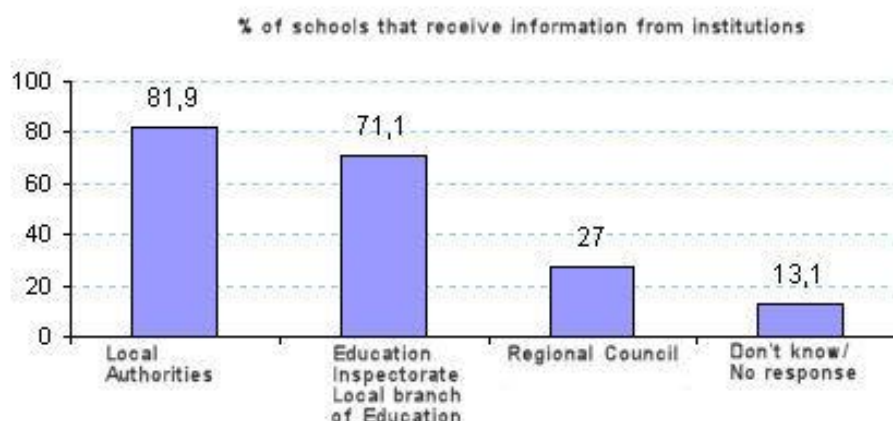
The Social Services of the Local Authorities, together with the Department of Education (Inspectorate of Education or specific staff from local offices), are the parties that send most information to schools with regard to cases of absenteeism in which they participate.

This higher percentage is properly related to the programmes[16] that are carried out from both levels which are targeted at reducing school absenteeism. These programmes include protocols of collaboration and specific action in these cases, both to notify the procedures followed as well as taking up joint measures.

The highest percentage of state schools that receive information both from the Inspectorate of Education as well as from Social Services of the Local Authorities and from the Regional Councils is probably because it is the State schools that have more contact with these institutions to forward cases of absenteeism.

> ➤ **Methods of communication between schools and other institutions**

The method of communication to notify the procedure between these levels and schools is mainly by telephone and by specific meetings in the case of the Council and the Inspectorate of Education

Percentage of schools that receive information and methods of communication

	Written report	Phone	Specific meeting	Systematic meetings
Local Authority	17.5	32.1	30.7	19
Inspectorate of Education and local offices	18.9	40.8	37.2	7.2
Regional Council	3.6	11.7	14.6	2.2

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[16] Programme to ensure the right to education: Eradication of the lack of schooling and school absenteeism in Bizkaia. EUDEL, Basque Government and Regional Council.

Methods of communication of institutions with schools
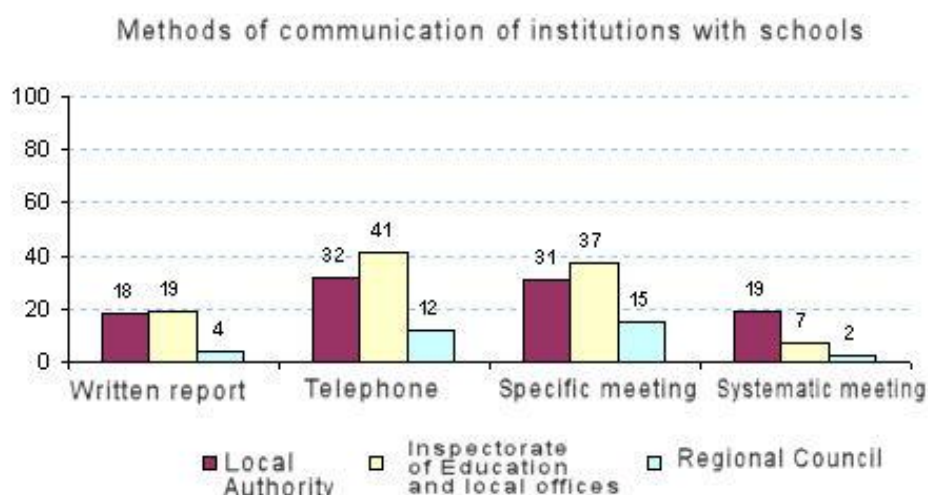
The fact that telephone communication together with specific meetings are most often used when it comes to notifying the process being implemented suggests mechanisms that allow rapid intervention when there is a problem, as these are more flexible channels of communication that enable rapid and immediate response.

With regard to the Social Services of the Local Authorities, use of systematic meetings with the schools in order to intervene in cases of students with an absenteeism problem is worthy of merit. The fact that a high percentage of schools state that these meetings are set up systematically and periodically reveals the existence of shared work targeted at prevention, as well as showing the continuity and stability in the intervention performed.

4. Prevention measures at ESO schools

The measures of reinforcement and individualised student-focused attention carried out at the ESO schools have an important impact on the prevention of school absenteeism during obligatory education. These are specific programmes designed for the student who is behind in their studies, with academic failure or personal difficulties, as well as for schools located in underprivileged socio-cultural settings. The implementation of some of these measures, which are regulated and legislated, brings with it an adaptation of the syllabus, either for a specific student, for a group or for a class, and requires the application of special resources. The preparation of an educational plan or project is also required and this must be approved by the educational administration.

There are also other reinforcement measures that require organisation of the course and the school in order to adapt the teaching to the students' needs. These measures, such as educational support or dealing with classroom diversity, do not require the school to prepare a project or official approval, but it does require an explanation of the aims in the school's plans.

None of the measures are directly designed to intervene in situations of students that are absent from school; however, they do entail a method of individualised attention

that is useful to avoid leaving school early by students at risk. Given that these are measures to directly intervene with students with some kind of academic failure, they likewise represent an indirect method of intervening with regard to students leaving school early.

Individualised attention programmes carried out at schools

The most usual features of the programmes or measures are summarised below. More details are given in the introduction (page 14).

- **Projects of Specific Educational Intervention (PIE)**
- **Complementary schooling programmes**
- **Curricular Diversification programme**
- **Educational reinforcement**
- **Dealing with classroom diversity**
- **Diversity and coexistence programme**

The Curricular Diversification programmes, together with educational support and dealing with classroom diversity, are the three measures that are most implemented. More than half of the schools carry out curricular diversification programmes and almost 75% have set up measures of educational support outside the classroom as well as dealing with diversity inside the classroom. We must point out that the last two measures are the most standard and do not require significant adaptation of the syllabus or extraordinary material resources.

Individualised attention programmes carried out at ESO centres

	Under development		At project stage	
	Number of centres	%	Number of centres	%
Specific Educational Intervention Projects (PIE)	44	32	1	0.7
Complementary schooling programmes	54	39	3	2.2
Diversity and coexistence programme	25	18	8	6
Curricular diversification programme	72	53	4	3
Educational reinforcement (outside the ordinary classroom)	106	77	3	2
Dealing with classroom diversity	97	71	8	6

Total number of centres: 137
Don't know/No response 5 centres

The Specific Educational Intervention Projects (PIE) are in place in 32% of schools. This measure requires a school project with specific resources, which must be approved by the Governing Body of the school and by the local office of the Department of Education, with specific conditions with regard to the students and the organisation of the school.
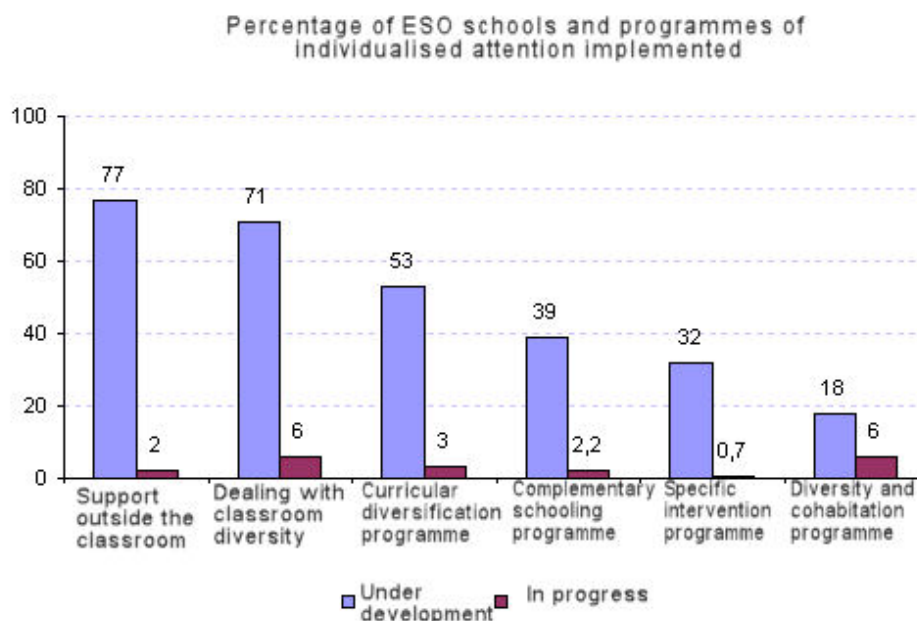
Percentage of ESO schools and programmes of individualised attention implemented

The most standard measures of attention are used at both State schools and State-assisted schools in the same proportion, while the measures to deal with students with bigger problems that require special resources and specific planning by the school reveal a higher proportion at state schools (PIE, Complementary Programme, Curricular Diversification).

A thorough analysis of how schools use some of the aforementioned measures is shown below, especially those measures that are most frequent and would bring with them the allocation of important educational resources. It is coincidental that the measures most employed by schools are those that ensure individualised attention to the students, at the same time as these require the school to make greater efforts, both as regards organisational and planning aspects as well as the staff resources needed.

The number of classrooms that exists within each programme and the students that use these is analysed, also for students over the age of 16 in accordance with the following programmes:
-   Specific Educational Intervention Programmes (PIE)
-   Complementary schooling programmes
-   Curricular Diversification programme
-   Educational reinforcement (outside the ordinary classroom)

➢ **Specific Educational Intervention Projects (PIE)**

This programme is applied at 44 schools included in the sample, in which there are 62 classrooms.

Virtually 80% of the classrooms that implement a specific intervention project are at State schools. This can be explained by the fact that these projects are targeted at State schools where there is an underprivileged social class. The remainder, 21% of these classrooms, are located at State-assisted schools and

can be considered in reality as singular projects, by virtue of which the State-assisted schools receive the corresponding subsidies to deal with this problem.

This means the 2.4% of third and fourth year ESO students included in the sample are in classrooms with a Specific Educational Intervention Project (PIE). Of the total number of students that benefit from these programmes, 2.5% (10 students) are over 16 years old and are being educated at 5 State schools.

Territories	PIE students		Students over the age of 16	
	No.	%	No.	%
Araba	64	16.2	5	7.8
Bizkaia	233	59	4	1.7
Gipuzkoa	98	24.8	1	1
Total	**395**		**10**	**2.53**

* Percentage calculated on PIE students of each territory

> ## Complementary schooling programmes

From the analysed sample, 54 schools have students that share a temporary complementary schooling programme with another school.

110 students participate in these, accounting for 0.6% of third and fourth year students of the ESO sample, distributed in accordance with the network and territory as shown below:

Territories	Students with complementary schooling		Students over the age of 16*	
	No.	%	No.	%
Araba	15	13.6	0	0
Bizkaia	60	54.4	13	21.6
Gipuzkoa	35	31.8	13	37.1
Total	**110**		**26**	

* Percentage calculated on students undergoing complementary schooling in each territory

The State schools deal with more than 75% of students that take part in complementary schooling programmes, with more than half of the students (54.4%) belonging to ESO schools in Bizkaia. 23.6% of these are over the age of 16; this accounts for exactly 26 students at school, mainly at State-assisted schools and equally distributed over the territories of Bizkaia and Guipúzcoa.

> ## Curricular Diversification Programmes

This is the most extensive measure if we bear in mind that something in excess of half of the schools included in the sample carry out these programmes. In the sample under analysis, there are 89 curricular diversification classrooms that deal with a total of 738 students and whose objective is to achieve the objectives of ESO through this adapted programme. This means that the Curricular Diversification Programmes handle 4.42% of third and fourth year ESO students of the sample under analysis.

The Curricular Diversification classrooms and the students that study this obligatory stage here are distributed in accordance with the network and territory as follows:

Territories	Number of curricular diversification classrooms	%
Araba	16	18
Bizkaia	46	51.7
Gipuzkoa	27	30.3
Total	**89**	**100**

The State schools have a higher number of curricular diversification classrooms, with a percentage of 68.5%, a little more than twice that of the State-assisted schools. Broken down by territories, Bizkaia has more than half of the existing classrooms in the sample analysed.

With regard to the students of these 89 classrooms, 738 students are concentrated mainly in Bizkaia and Guipúzcoa and a little more than 70% study these programmes at State schools.

Of the total number of students that take part in the Curricular Diversification programmes, almost three quarters (precisely 72.5%) are over the age of 16 and undertake their schooling mainly at State schools. The high percentage of boys and girls of this age schooled under the Curricular Diversification can be explained if we bear in mind that this is a programme is especially targeted at students from 16 to 18.

Territories	Students in Curricular Diversification		Students over the age of 16*	
	No.	%	No.	%
Araba	159	21.5	125	78.6
Bizkaia	330	44.7	240	72.7
Gipuzkoa	249	33.7	170	68.3
Total	738		535	

* Percentage calculated on Curricular Diversification students of each territory

This shows the importance of the measure in the prevention of academic failure, in the early abandonment of studies, as well as the possibility of achieving the objectives of the obligatory education stage, as this option reaches 4.42% of third and fourth year ESO students.

➢ **Educational support outside the ordinary classroom**

This is an individualised measure of attention carried out at the ESO School, but outside the ordinary classroom. This attention is either given at the so-called support classes or in groups where individualised attention is given over the course in order to meet students' needs.

77% of the schools included in the sample say they offer this measure. The schools have 247 classrooms or groups of educational support for third and fourth year students of ESO, which handle a total of 1029 students. This means that

6.16% of students in the second cycle of ESO included in the sample receive individualised educational support outside of the classroom.

Of these, 123 students are 16 or older, accounting for 4% of the student group that receives individualised support outside the classroom in certain curricular areas. The educational support groups and students are distributed over the network and territory in the following way:

Territories	Number of educational support groups	%
Araba	39	15.8
Bizkaia	133	54.8
Gipuzkoa	75	30.4
Total	247	

These groups handle 1029 students in the third and fourth year of ESO, located mainly in Araba, where almost 10% of students receive this support (9.5%).

Territory	Students undertaking educational support		Students over the age of 16*	
	No.	**%***	**No.**	**%**
Araba	244	9.5	43	17.6
Bizkaia	416	4.8	51	12.3
Gipuzkoa	369	6.6	29	7.9
Total	1029	6.16	123	

* Percentage calculated on students of each territory

Synthesis over the measures of individualised attention carried out.

By way of summarising the implementation of these measures at schools, and taking into consideration the total number of students included in the sample -16,697 students- we can state that 13.5% of the students, viz., around 13 of every 100 students studying the second year of ESO, receive some kind of individualised educational support.

The immediate aim of these measures of individualised attention is to achieve the objectives of the obligatory educational stage and indirectly ensure the obligatory schooling of students. However, they encompass a spectrum of modifications that range from lesser to greater adaptation of the syllabus, as well as different allocation of resources required to implement them, making them measures that go from more to less standardised.

We can verify that the most usual are those that involve less curricular modifications, although they may require serious modifications in the organisation of the school. The individualised educational support is the most frequent measure and affects 6.1% of students at this stage. Its purpose is to help students in certain areas of the syllabus yet retain the organisation of the curriculum and the targets of this stage.

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% of students in he second cycle of ESO that is subject to each programme

- ◼ Support outside the classroom
- ◻ Specific Educational of intervention
- ◼ Curricular diversification programme
- ◻ Complementary schooling programme
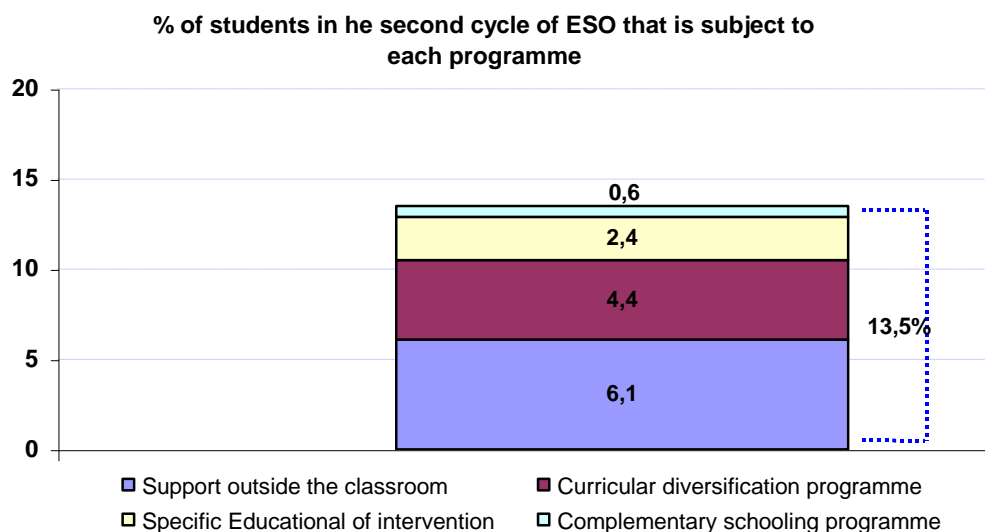
The Curricular Diversification Programmes are carried out with 4.4% of the population and, although these entail modifications to the syllabus organisation, retain the securing of the objectives of this stage as their purpose. These are specially designed so that students can pursue their basic obligatory education in spite of being over the age of 16.

Both the Specific Educational Intervention Programmes (PIE) as well as the Complementary Schooling are given in a lower proportion: 2.4% of students in the former case, and not even 1% of students in the latter case (0.6%). In both cases these are measures that are less standardised, which ensure schooling of students but bring with them serious modifications to the syllabus given the problem in question.

Educational attention to students over the age of 16

Students over 16 that benefit from these programmes

	No.	% *
Curricular Diversification	535	72.5
Complementary Schooling Programme	26	23.6
Non-curricular support	123	12
Projects of Specific Educational Intervention (PIE)	10	2.5

* % on the total number of students that benefit from each programme

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Students over the age of 16
Percentage of the total of students in each programme
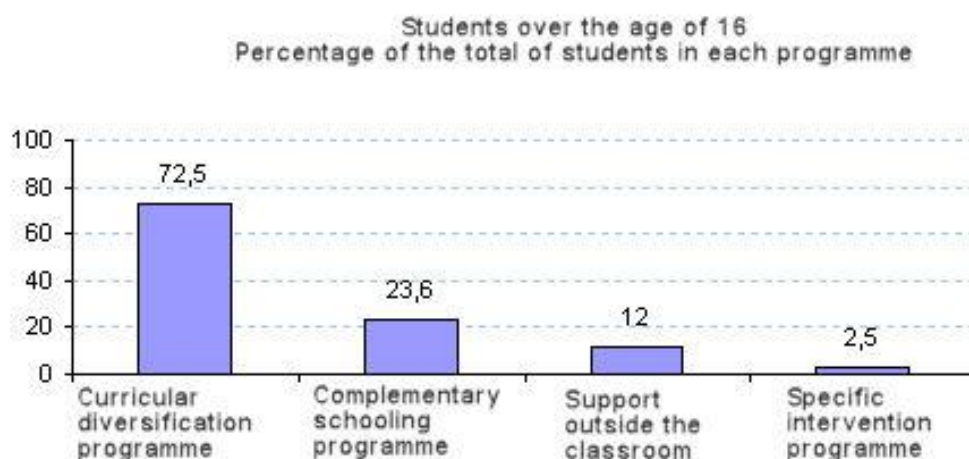
The Curricular Diversification Programmes are shown as a very potent measure to ensure that students with schooling difficulties, viz., students that may be more susceptible to leaving the educational system during the obligatory stage, may pursue their education. We must not forget the one of the aims of Curricular Diversification is so that students with specific school problems can achieve the objectives of the Obligatory Secondary Education stage.

Therefore, the fact that 72.5% of students that continue their studies through this programme are over the age of 16, simply confirms that this programme is an appropriate and efficient method to prevent ESO students leaving school early.

Other measures, such as Complementary Schooling or Individualised support outside the classrrom, are given to a lesser extent. Something that is normal if we bear in mind that these are not programmes especially designed for the 16 to 18 year-old group; however, they do contribute to retaining students with a higher risk of abandoning education.

Task forces on absenteeism at schools

From the sample analysed we see that there are a number of ESO schools that have set up a stable task force of teaching staff for the purpose of preventing school absenteeism and to take measures when situations arise. There are 17 centres, which represents 4.4% of the sample, and which are distributed as follows:

ESO centres with a stable task force on absenteeism

	No.	%
Total	17	12.4

Network	No.	%
State	10	17.2
State-assisted	7	8.9

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5. Analysis of schools with and without students leaving early

We look at different aspects of the schools in accordance with whether there are cases of students leaving education or not. Schools included in the sample are split into two groups:

- **Schools without students leaving education early**: There are 106 schools included in the sample that have no incident of students leaving education
- **Schools with students leaving education early:** This includes the 31 ESO centres where there have been cases of enrolled students leaving education.

Control measures at schools

Generally speaking, schools that have students that leave early carry out a higher percentage of actions concerning student control.

	Schools with abandonment %	Schools without abandonment %
They define the reasons that justify absences	64.5	72.6
They record absences daily	96.8	83
They notify management about absences on daily basis	32.3	21.7
Communication of unjustified absences to the Inspectorate	64.5	50
- Prior to the fifth of each month	41.9	39.6
- Throughout the month	22.6	10.4
- Don't know/No response	3.2	5.7
Total schools	**No: 31**	**No: 106**

The percentage of schools without abandonment that say they have defined the reasons that justify student absences is higher than in those schools that suffer from education abandonment. However, the latter records absences and notifies these quicker than centres that do not suffer from leaving school early.

The percentage of schools with cases of abandonment among students that send unjustified absences to the Inspectorate of Education is also higher. While 64.5% of centres with abandonment send a report on absences to the Inspectorate within the first five days of the month or during the month, only 50% of those that do not suffer from abandonment carry this out within these deadlines.

Schools' communication with other institutions

There are differences between these two groups of schools when the problem persists and they have to notify other external institutions. Centres with students that leave have a higher percentage of dealings with the aforementioned institutions than schools that do not.

	Schools with abandonment %	Schools without abandonment %
Local Authority (Social services)	90.3	66
Local branch of Dept of Education	64.5	63.2
Regional Council (Social services)	19.4	13.2
They do not forward to any service	3.2	6.6
Total schools	**31**	**106**

Almost all schools with cases of leaving school early make contact with the Social Services departments of Local Authorities. 90.3% of the schools notify the services of the situation to enable the latter to intervene, while the figure for schools that do not have students that leave education is 66%.

Use of case referral reports

Centres with abandonment use standard reports to refer cases to other institutions and outside services with more frequency. This is logical as it is in these cases where there is joint intervention from different institutions.

	Schools with abandonment %	Schools without abandonment %
Use standard reports to refer cases to other institutions	71	55.7
Total schools	**31**	**106**

Communication of institutions with schools

At schools affected by students leaving school early, the Local Authority services keep in touch through written reports and telephone calls, while schools that are not affected by abandonment hold a slightly higher percentage of specific and systematic meetings. This seems to indicate the kind of preventive interventions carried out at centres that suffer from abandonment and follow-up action is taken when the problem has already risen. Preventive action through systematic and specific meetings seems more preferable at schools unaffected by students leaving school early.

The methods of communication used by Social Services of Local Authorities to keep in touch with schools

	Written report	Phone	Specific meeting	Systematic meeting
Schools with abandonment	38.7	45.2	25.8	9.7
Schools without abandonment	11.3	28.3	32.1	21.7

Individualised attention programmes at school that favour the prevention of leaving school early.

	Schools with abandonment %	Schools without abandonment %
Specific Educational Intervention Project	35.5	31.1
Complementary schooling programme	45.2	37.7
Curricular diversification	64.5	49.1
Educational reinforcement (outside the ordinary classroom)	83.9	75.5
Diversity and cohabitation at school	25.8	16
Dealing with diversity in the classroom	83.9	67
Total schools	**31**	**106**

Schools with children that leave their studies early have set up more individualised care measures than those that do not have this problem. 83.9% of schools with students that leave early have set up measures to deal with diversity in the classroom as against 67% of centres that do not have this problem and that use the same measure. There are also differences in the setting-up of Curricular Diversification Programmes in both groups of schools: 64.5% of schools that have students that leave early implement this measure, while this is used in 49.1% of schools that do not have this problem.

We could consider that some of the measures analysed are characterised by the fact that they require more individualised syllabus organisation and more extraordinary organisation measures at the school, and we therefore looked at the number of measures at schools with and without students leaving early. We analysed the following:

- Specific Educational Intervention Project
- Complementary schooling programme
- Curricular diversification

Schools that implement all three measures

	No.	%
Schools with abandonment	5	16.1
Schools without abandonment	19	17.9
Total number of centres	24	17.5

*% of the total schools (with or without the problem of students leaving early)

These data reveal that the existence of students that leave school early does not have an impact when it comes to accumulating individualised measures of attention: The concentration of these measures at schools with and without students leaving school early is similar. As a consequence, the concentration of these measures at schools without students that leave early highlights their preventive function.

On analysing schools that set up one or two of these measures we can see that:
- Schools with students that leave early mainly concentrate two measures.
- Schools without the problem of students leaving early only apply one of the three measures shown.

Concentration of individualised measures of attention at school
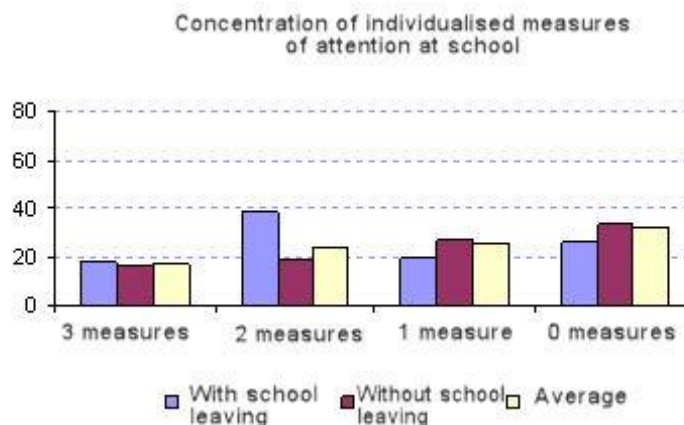
6. SYNTHESIS OF THE DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

On global data of leaving school early

- 77% of schools included in the sample have not had any student leave during the 2005-06 course in the third or fourth years of ESO.
  - 23% of schools (31) have experienced cases of students leaving. 58% of these (18) refers to a single student
- Of all students included in the sample and enrolled in years three and four of ESO, there are 56 students that have left, and this is equivalent to 0.34%.
  - The number of girls that have left (33) is higher than the number of boys (23).

Concerning reasons for leaving school

- The management of schools that have had students leave the system during 2005/06 (56 in total) are of the opinion that the main reasons why students leave are personal: personal problems, lack of motivation for studies, academic failure, etc.
  - This is followed by reasons concerning the socio-family environment: destructured family, studies not considered useful, underprivileged social class, etc.
  - Finally the reasons concerning the school environment have an impact: imbalances between the programmes and the students' needs.

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Control measures at schools

- Absences are recorded at 99% of schools. 86% of schools record absences daily and 12% do so weekly.
  - At 77% of schools this control is notified to the school management.

Control measures with students

- Faced with an unjustified absence, in 93% of cases the family is notified. This is without prejudice to an interview being held with the student in question in 80% of cases.
- If there are several unjustified absences and the student is therefore considered as being at risk of leaving the educational system, the family is notified in a similar percentage (96%), however
  - the percentage of interviews with the student rises to 91%, and moreover
  - other measures, such as referral to other services (59%) and individual guidance (64%), go up considerably.
- Interviews take place in 84% of cases when there have been from one to three unjustified absences.
  - The Form Tutor carries out the interview with ordinary students but the Head Teacher or the Guidance Counsellor of the school takes over in 50% of cases when the student is at risk of leaving. The scope of intervention goes beyond the classroom, although the Form Teacher continues to hold responsibility.

Control measures with the family

- Unjustified absences are notified to the families within a maximum of three days at more than 85% of the schools included in the sample.
  - When the students are at risk of leaving school, 73% of schools notify families on the first day and this happens both in State schools as well as State-assisted schools in all three territories.
- The usual contact method with families of ordinary students is by telephone.
  - An interview takes place when the student is at risk of leaving school.
- The person that gets in contact with the family is the Form Tutor in 95% of cases.
  - When the student is at risk of leaving the school, in addition to the Form Tutor (86%), the Head Teacher carries out an interview in 44% of cases and the Guidance Counsellor in 26% of cases.
- The purpose of making contact with both families of ordinary students as well as those of children that are at risk of leaving school early is in the following order of priority: notifying the situation, setting up joint measures and asking families to take measures. The percentages vary ostensibly.
- To monitor the correction measures put in place only 47% of cases set a deadline.
  - When the student is at risk the percentage of schools that set a deadline rises to 50%.

Absenteeism prevention measures implemented at schools

- The programmes of Curricular Diversification and Educational Support are the measures used most frequently at ESO schools.
    - More than half of the schools included in the sample carry out Curricular Diversification programmes.
    - 75% of the schools included in the sample have set up educational support measures both in and out of the standard classroom.
- The implementation of other, more singular measures, given that these require a school plan that must be approved beforehand, such as Specific Educational Intervention Projects tied to schools that cater to underprivileged classes and are carried out in 32% of schools included in the sample.
- The most standard measures of attention are used at both State schools and State-assisted schools in the same proportion, while the measures to deal with students with bigger problems that require special resources and specific planning by the school, reveals a higher proportion at State schools.
    - The programmes that roll out more individualised educational attention measures, such as the Specific Educational Intervention Projects, Curricular Diversification and the Complementary Schooling Programmes are carried out by a higher percentage (twice as much) at State schools.
    - When more standard educational attention measures are applied, the percentage of State-assisted schools and State schools is similar. More than 70% of schools included in the sample (both types) apply educational support measures or programmes that deal with classroom diversity.

ESO students that received specific measures of educational attention

- 13.5% of students at ESO schools included in the sample receive individualised attention through one of the aforementioned programmes. Specifically:
    - 6.1% of ESO students receive Individualised educational support outside the classroom in some of the syllabus subjects.
    - 4.4% of students at ESO schools included in the sample continue schooling through the Curricular Diversification Programme
    - 2.4% of students are in classroom in which a specific Educational Intervention Project is applied to a small group of students.
    - 0.6% of students, viz., not even 1% of students, share 2 schools within a Complementary Schooling Programme.
- These programmes carry out a function of keeping students within the educational system, when these students could otherwise leave. This is the case with students aged 16 or over that is subject to different programmes.
    - 72.5% of students that are dealt with within the Curricular Diversification programme are aged 16 or older. This programme is extremely efficient if we look at the high percentage of students of this age that are dealt with. This is logical, because this programme stems from the need to respond to students over the obligatory age, to help them achieve objectives of the obligatory period by using an adapted programme.
    - The other programmes also respond to students of this age from an educational point of view, although in smaller proportion. 23.6% of students that follow a Complementary Schooling Programme are

older than 16, as is 12% of those that receive educational support outside of the classroom and 2.5% of those that are in a class with a Specific Educational Intervention Project.

Characteristics of schools WITH and WITHOUT students that leave early

- Schools that have students leave school early carry out a higher percentage of controlling actions to prevent abandonment the centres that do not have this problem. Specifically:
    - 64.5% of schools with students that leave their studies send the unjustified absences to the Inspectorate of Education, while this figure is 50% at schools that do not have students leaving.
    - 22.6% of schools with students that leave their studies notify these absences throughout the month; while 10% of schools that do not suffer from students leaving do so within this period.
- The relationship that is established with other institutions to refer problematic cases and to enable these parties to intervene is higher among centres that have students that abandon schooling.
    - 90% of schools with abandonment notify the Social Services of Local Authorities against 66% of those schools that do not have students that leave early.
    - 71% of schools with abandonment have standard reports to refer cases to other institutions, as against 55.7% of schools without students that leave early.
- The schools with students that leave their studies implement more individualised support measures. Actions to respond to the classroom diversity take place in 84% of schools with students that leave, and in 67% of schools that do not have this problem.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Is a low rate of school abandonment maintained in the last two years of ESO?

In order that the Education system guarantees the right to education, schools of the Basque Country receive a letter from the Territorial Delegations at the start of the academic year, offering the school measures to enable it to fulfil its duty of making sure that all students within the obligatory age range attend school.

The measures carried out by the Inspectorate of Education in recent years have led to a lower rate of students leaving the educational system during the obligatory period. To find out whether the lower rate of leaving school early remains level over time we compared the data included in the *Inspectorate reports for the three territories "Control of school absenteeism" 2004/05 and 2005/06* academic years with those collected in this analysis on *"School Leaving"* for the 2005/06 academic year.

In the 2004/05 academic year, the Inspectorate of Education of the Basque Country drafted the first report based on data sent by schools. This report, as well as the one prepared in the 2005/06 academic year, includes a broad spectrum both with regard to the educational stages (Primary and Secondary, as well as with regard to the content of the absenteeism term that ranges from 20% of monthly school time with unjustified absences, through to lack of schooling or 100% absenteeism.

The data included in the two reports are only taken into consideration to establish the comparison of these data with absenteeism of 99.9% and to lack of schooling which are those that are jointly considered as being comparable to abandonment. The definitions of these items in the annual report from the Inspectorate of Education and the definition of school leaving of this research are listed below.

> *Definition of lack of schooling: This is the situation of minors between the ages of compulsory schooling (6-16) for those that have not enrolled at a school. This concept also includes the situation of minors when there are 100% of unjustified absences even though they are enrolled.*

> *Definition of 99.9% absenteeism: Lack of ongoing attendance at school without a justified reason, consented or provided by the family or through the will of the student in the case of pre-adolescents or adolescents. The range in this case is as follows: between 75% and 99.9% of days (given that 100% is included in the foregoing definition) without attending school.*

In this research, leaving school early is defined in the following way:

> *Definition of school leaving: This refers to students that are enrolled at the school at the beginning of the academic year and have not attended on any days for a least one month prior to the gathering of data and have not requested transfer of their academic records at any time in order to continue their studies at another school.*

A parallelism is drawn between abandonment and the sum of what the report from the Inspectorate of Education calls lack of schooling and 99.9% absenteeism for the purpose of comparing data

Global data of the Inspectorate reports and Research

The data stemming from Inspectorate reports and those shown in this research are as follows:

2004/05 Report from the Inspectorate of Education 2004/05 on ESO		
Total ESO students	**Total state school**	**Total state-assisted school**
70,503	29,810	40,693

Total number of ESO students leaving school (99.9% absenteeism + lack of schooling)	
Number of students	**percentage**
194	**0.28**

2005/06 Report from the Inspectorate of Education on ESO		
Total ESO students	**Total state school**	**Total state-assisted school**
69,839	29,879	39,960

Total number of ESO students leaving school (99.9% absenteeism + lack of schooling)	
Number of students	**percentage**
145	**0.21**

Research into third and fourth year ESO students leaving school. 2005-06 academic year		
All students In third and fourth year of ESO	**Total state school**	**Total state-assisted school**
16,697	7,026	9,671

| Total number of students that left included in the sample	
Number of students	**percentage**
56	**0.34**

Comparative analysis

The data of the Inspectorate of Education analysed here refers to the entire ESO student population of the Basque Country, while those of the research deal with the third and fourth years of ESO.

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The difference in the percentages of the data captured in the same course could be due to the fact that the level of abandonment of the entire population of ESO students over the four years is included, while the research sample only considers the second year.

Percentage of students leaving

Reports from the Inspectorate of education		Research
2004/05	2005/06	2005/06
0.28	0.21	0.34

Percentage that leave
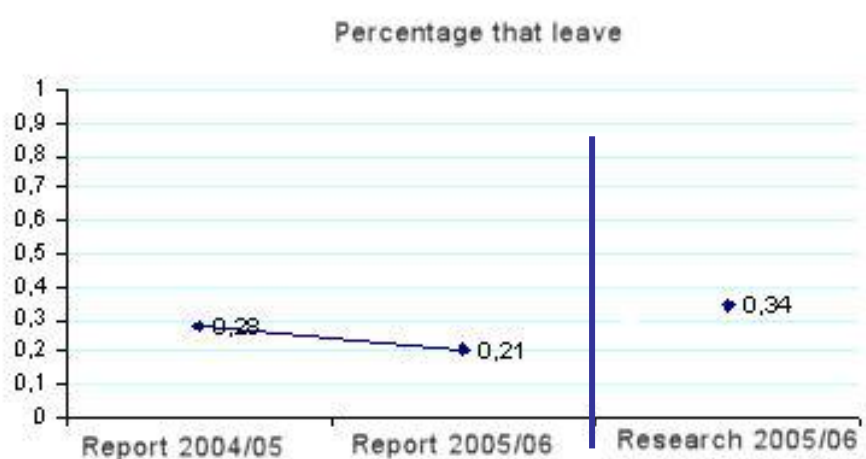
If the percentage is calculated only taking into consideration schools that send information to the Inspectorate of Education, this coincides with the figure that appears in the report from the 2005/06 academic year, viz., 0.21%.

Number of students that leave school and percentages by type of school

	STATE		STATE-ASSISTED	
	No.	%	No.	%
2004/05 report from the Inspectorate	141	**0.47**	53	**0.13**
2005/06 report from the Inspectorate	116	**0.39**	22	**0.07**
2005/06 research	28	**0.4**	28	**0.29**

The difference between the three studies with regard to the percentages of students that leave in State schools is less than in State-assisted schools.

In spite of the difference in the results, these data repeatedly uphold the low rate of leaving school prior to finishing the obligatory educational period in the Basque Country. But this low level of abandonment must not lead to a relaxing of measures because as stated in the 2005/06 report from the Inspectorate of Education[17] *"... the*

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[17] Inspectorate of Education. General plan. Control over absenteeism from school. 2005/06. Report from the Basque Country

size of this problem, small though it is from the educational system point of view, is not small from the individual perspective, because this situation that leads to academic failure is one of the reasons behind the future social exclusion of these persons".

With regard to this question we can state:
- The low level of abandoning the educational system by students at the age of obligatory schooling is below 0.35% in any of the three reports analysed.
- If we compare the two reports of successive years prepared by the Inspectorate of Education, which analyse the data by taking the same population as reference (the entire population of the Basque Country that is studying one of the four ESO levels), we observe a decrease in the percentage of students that leave which is maintained both through kind of school as well as by territory.
- The research data match the results obtained by the Inspectorate in the same academic year (2005/06). When the research percentage of abandonment (0.34%) is taken away from the percentage of schools which, whilst they are affected by students leaving, do not send record slips to the Inspectorate of education. In this case, the percentage of leaving school early pursuant to the research is also 0.21%.

2. Do schools comply with the measures put forward by the Inspectorate to prevent absenteeism and lack of schooling?

At the start of the academic year, schools receive a circular on "the right to education". This circular reminds them of their duty to ensure all students between the ages 6 and 16 attend class; viz., during the period of compulsory education. The school management must fill in and send two records and sheets every month to the territorial Inspectorates, one that includes the student that has not attended school (has not enrolled) and/or has 100% unjustified absences, and another that includes students with school absenteeism that is equal to or greater than 20% of unjustified absences in the month prior to notification to the pertinent Inspectorate.

Schools included in the sample and the dispatch of records to the Inspectorate

Send		Do not send		Don't know/No response	
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
73	53	57	42	7	5.1

The percentage of schools included in the sample (137) that send the records or sheets to the Inspectorate is in excess of 50%; although only in 23% of schools (31) is there a case of abandonment (see page 49). It must be remembered that one of the records is used to include absenteeism that is equal to or greater than 20% over the last month, and does not refer to total abandonment.

Schools with and without students leaving and the sending of records to the Inspectorate

	Send		Do not send		Don't know/No response	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Without students leaving	53	50	47	44.3	6	5.7
With students leaving	20	64.5	10	32.3	1	3.2

As mentioned previously, 53% of all the schools included in the sample sent record sheets to the Inspectorate. When this percentage is compared with the schools that have students that have abandoned the educational system this figure rises to 65%.

Number of students that leave by school and the dispatch of records to the Inspectorate

Number that have left	Send		Do not send		Don't know/No response	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1 student left	13	72.2	5	27.8		
2 students left	6	66.6	2	22.2	1	11.1
3 students left	2	100				
5 or more students left	2	100				

100% of the four schools that have three or more students currently not attending send the absenteeism and/or lack of schooling records to the Inspectorate of Education. 67% of schools that have two students leave send the records to the Inspectorate of Education, a figure that rises to 72% in the 18 schools that have one student that leaves.

This shows that the level of compliance with sending the records and the sheets is higher in schools that have students leaving early than in those that do not have this problem.

Percentage of schools included in the sample and the dispatch of records to the Local authorities

Send		Do not send		Don't know/No response	
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
98	71.5	26	19	13	9.5

The percentage of schools included in the sample that send the record sheets to local authorities is 72%, 11 points above those that send them to the Inspectorate. This is in spite of the fact that this requirement is not carried out in Araba by the Local Department of Education.

An analysis by schools with and without students that leave shows that 90% of schools with abandonment send the record sheets to the local authorities. This is 25% higher than those that send them to the Inspectorate.

Percentage of schools with students that leave and the dispatch of records to Local Authorities

Number that have left	Send		Do not send	
	No.	%	No.	%
1 student left	17	94.4	1	5.6
2 students left	8	88.9	1	11.1
3 students left	1	50	1	50
5 or more students left	2	100		

As with notification to the Inspectorate of Education, the percentages of notification of absenteeism to the local authorities are higher at those schools that have cases of students leaving. So, if the percentage of schools that send records is 72%, this figure goes up where there is a problem of third and fourth year ESO students leaving the system. Two schools account for 50% of the schools where three students have left.

An analysis of the schools' methods of communication with the institutions or services shows that the highest percentage of systematic meetings takes place with local authorities.

With regard to this question we can therefore conclude that:
- More than half of schools that satisfy the requirement of the Local Department of Education with regard to unjustified absences.
    - 53% of schools included in the sample send the record sheets to the Area Inspectorate; this percentage goes up to 64% of schools included in the sample that have students that have abandoned the system.
    - 28% of schools with a student that has left do not send the information. This figure is 22% for those schools that had two students leave over the academic year.
- The level of compliance with this requirement of sending these to the local authorities is even higher. The percentage of schools that send the records is 71.5%, rising to 90% of schools that have had students leave during the 2005/06 academic year.
    - It is possible that the difference in the percentages of notification to local authorities and those targeted at the Inspectorate is due to the different roles carried out once the problem has been detected. The action of local authorities may be tied to more direct and immediate intervention via social services. The Inspectorate of Education is the body that heads the collaboration and coordination process between the different institutions and services involved.

3. Is there a relationship between the control and prevention measures implemented at the schools and the risk levels of students leaving school early?

From the theoretical point of view it seems logical that schools with more students that are at risk of leaving the educational system implement more measures to control absenteeism and foster preventive measures to counter the same problem, such as individualised attention programmes.

With regard to control measures we have verified that **schools that have students that leave**:

Record students' absences with greater regularity

- 96.8% record these daily………	83% of schools without the problem of students leaving early

They notify the absence report to the school management more frequently

- 32.3% notify these daily……….	21.7% of schools without the problem of students leaving early
- 9.7% do not notify these……….	17% of schools without the problem of students leaving early

They contact the family more expeditiously

|	
- 77.4% contact the family when there is one unjustified absence by an ordinary student ....…………….....	62.3% of schools without the problem of students leaving early do the same.
- 84% contact the family when there is one unjustified absence by a student at risk ..	76.4% of schools without the problem of students leaving early notify this when there is one absence.

They send the absence records to the Inspectorate of Education within a shorter period of time.

- 64.5% send the absence report to the Inspectorate……	50% of schools without the problem of students leaving early
- 41.9% do so prior to the fifth of each month……………………	39.6% of schools without the problem of students leaving early
- 22.6% send this report over the month ……………….....	10.4% of schools without the problem of students leaving early

These percentage differences are slightly higher in the case of schools that have students that abandon the education system. There are no notable differences between the percentages of groups from different schools with regard to the remaining measures of control.

There are significant differences with regard to the schools' relationships with other outside institutions when the situation of a student leaving school persists. Schools that have students that leave have more relationships with the Local Authorities Social Services than the group of schools that do not have this problem. 90.3% of schools with students that leave have relationships with Local Authorities as against 66% of schools without students that leave.

Relationship to other institutions. Percentage of schools
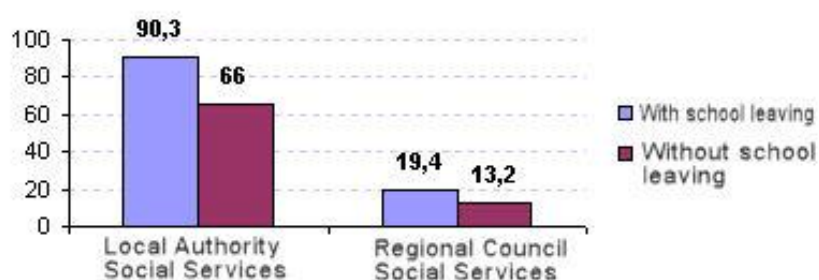
In so far as the individualised attention measures are concerned, the percentage of schools with students that leave early implement these programmes more than schools that do not have the problem of abandonment.

Individualised attention programmes at schools with and without students that leave early
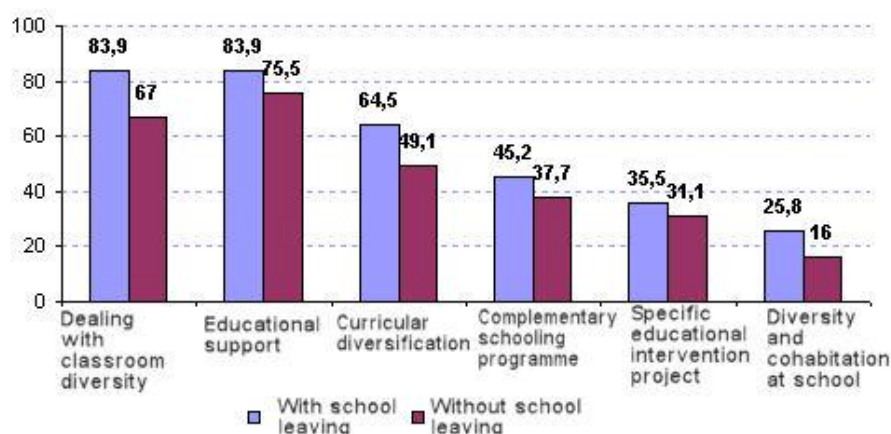
With regard to two specific situations, greater differences are observed when we analyse the action of schools, both with regard to schools that have students that leave as well as those that do not: actions in light of absences by **ordinary students** and absences by **students at risk of leaving** the educational system. Let's see how the schools behave in a different way in these situations.

Actions taken by the schools	With ordinary students	With students at risk
The absence is notified to the family on the same day	43%	73%
Contact is made with the family when there has been a single absence	65.7%	78.1%
The Form Teacher talks to the student	96.4%	67.9%
The Head Teacher talks to the student	15.3%	53.3%
The Guidance Counsellor talks to the student	20.4%	54.7%
The purpose of contacting the family is:		
- To set up joint measures	68.6%	84.7%
- So that the family takes measures	49.6%	70.1%
- To notify them that the issue is being referred to other services	14.6%	59.15

The schools set up different control measures when responding to situations involving ordinary students that are occasionally absent without justification, and when dealing with students considered to be at risk of leaving the educational system because they have already had chapters of absenteeism and unjustified absences with certain regularity.

In both cases the measures are direct and extremely immediate (more than 60% of schools make contact with the family when there has been one case of unjustified attendance), yet while 65.7% of schools make contact with families of ordinary students, this rises to 78.1% in the case of students at risk.

There is also evidence that the intervention of the school with regard to students at risk is less tied to the ordinary activity of the classroom. For example, whereas the individual interview with ordinary students is normally carried out by the Form Tutor (96.4%), higher intervention by the school management (53.3%) or the Guidance Counsellor (54.7%) takes place with students at risk. These data also show that in the case of students considered at risk of leaving the system the situation ceases to be a specific classroom problem and becomes a school problem.

We can therefore conclude that:
- It is obvious that schools adapt their strategies to the different student situations: They provide a more immediate and specialised response in cases of students considered at risk of leaving school, which acts as a method of preventing early school leaving.
- There is no evidence that the individualised attention programmes have a direct impact on the lower rate of students that leave the educational system during the obligatory educational stage; however, there *is* evidence that the relationship exists between the group of schools that have students that leave and the higher application of individualised attention programmes at these schools.
- This relationship would confirm the theory put forward previously: schools set up more individualised attention measures when they have a real problem; as well as their corrective aspect, these measures also have the function of preventing students leaving school early.

4. Are the individualised attention programmes or measures implemented at schools to retain students useful?

The theoretical point of view that says that school leaving early is a progressive process of withdrawal from the school, which is related to the personal "coupling or uncoupling" of the student with what happens within the educational sphere, something that in other research and assessments has been called the "sense of belonging to the school"[18].

From this perspective it is important to analyse the role the school has in whether or not the student leaves. We cannot therefore overlook the role that the educative context of schools has; the organisational conditions, syllabus aspects, educational policies and practices in the function of preventing students from leaving and retaining students within the educational system.

The special programmes or measures implemented at schools are set up to prevent academic failure; however, they also have the function of preventing leaving school early and retaining students within the education system.

This function is evident if we analyse both the students that are studying through individualised attention programmes as well as 16 year old students that continue their obligatory education within the ordinary education system, even when they have exceeded the obligatory age.

Firstly, we observed that 13.5% of third and fourth year ESO students of the schools included in the sample receive some kind of specific individualised attention, which

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[18] PISA. 2003. *"sense of belonging"* index

enables teaching to be better adapted to their personal situation. We can therefore state that roughly 13 of every 100 students are able to pursue their obligatory schooling thanks to the set-up of exceptional programmes and resources. This group of students (13.5%) could see their schooling compromised if there were not special programmes that enable teaching to adapt to their personal characteristics.

% of students included in the sample dealt with in each programme
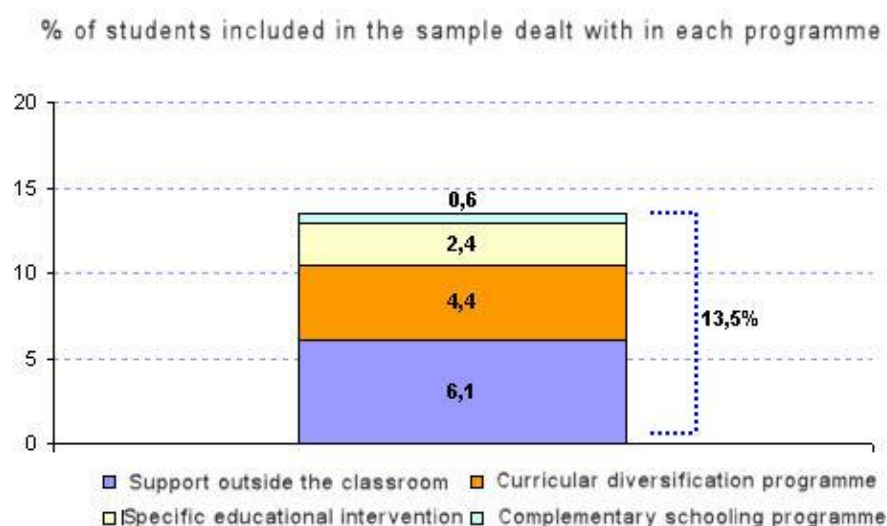

The following table shows students over the age of 16 that pursue their basic obligatory education through individualised attention measures or programmes.

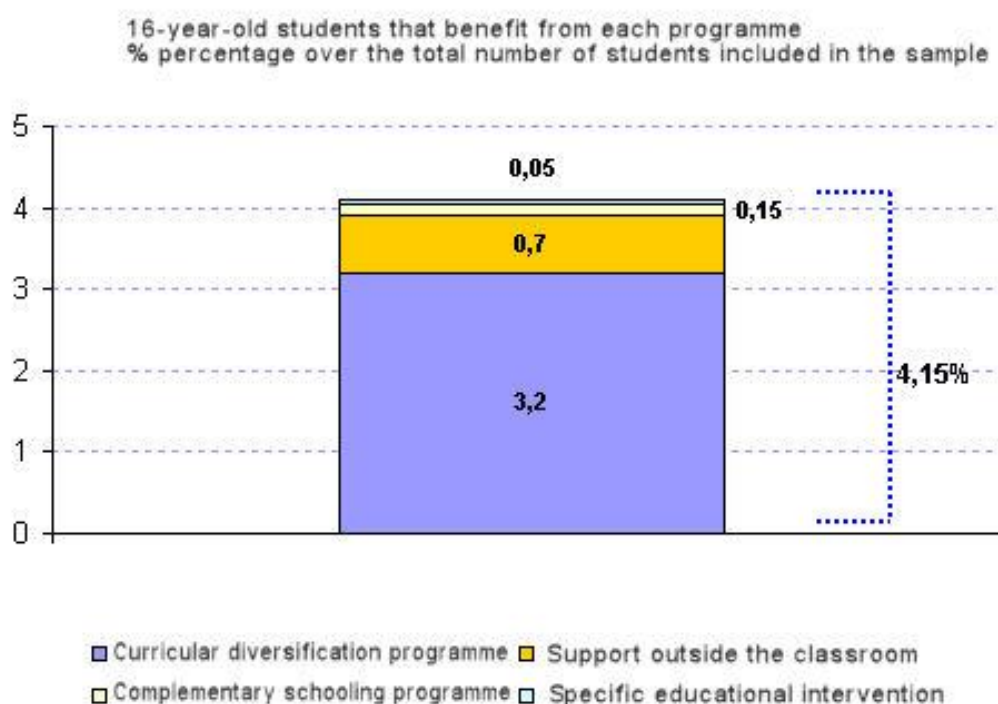**Students over 16 that benefit from these programmes**

	No.	% *
Curricular diversification	535	72.5
Complementary Schooling Programme	26	23.6
Support outside the classroom	123	12
Specific Educational Intervention Project (PIE)	10	2.5

* % on the total number of students that benefit from each programme

16-year-old students that benefit from each programme
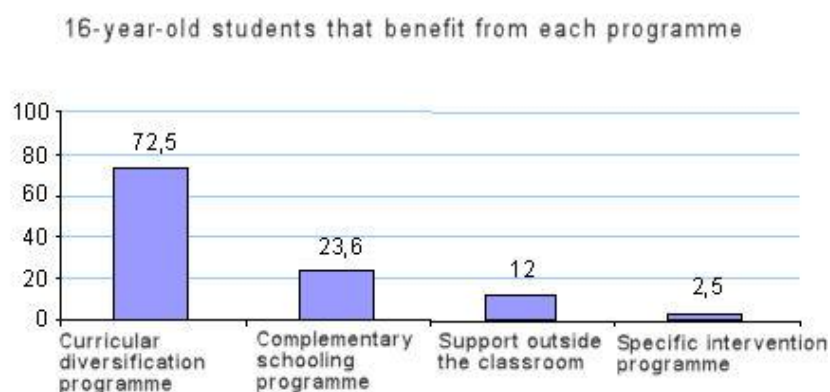
We can see that Curricular Diversification is the programme that responds to the highest percentage of students that have already reached the age of 16. 72.5% of students that follow this programme are 16 or older. It is therefore the individualised attention measure best suited to keeping students over the age of obligatory schooling within the ordinary schooling system and therefore satisfies the function for which it was created.

With regard to the entire sample, this group represents 4.15% of students that are 16 years or older within the educational system and who continue their basic education through special programmes that take into account the academic and personal peculiarities of each student. This data confirms that around 4 of every 100 students could have been potentially subject to leaving school early had there not been individualised attention through these programmes. As the following chart shows, the Curricular Diversification programme, through which 3.2% of all students pursue their basic education, accounts for the majority.

16-year-old students that benefit from each programme
% percentage over the total number of students included in the sample

We can therefore conclude that:
- The individualised attention programmes set up within the educational system respond to a large percentage of students (13.5%) that might otherwise have left.
- The effectiveness of these programmes is shown through the number of students that have reached the age of 16 and continue their basic education through them. 4.15% of all ESO students are 16 years or older and yet continue with their basic education in spite of not be under the obligation to do so.
- Among these programmes, the Curricular Diversification is the one that responds to the highest percentage of students of 16 or older within the ordinary educational system and which otherwise may have left school as there were no longer obliged to attend.

IV. FINAL CONCLUSIONS

By way of a general summary of the research, the most significant aspects resulting from the analyses carried out and which describe the characteristics of the Basque education system with regard to leaving school early are shown hereunder:

- **Low rate of students that leave education during the obligatory period**. Even though the rate of abandonment is low, the aim must be to ensure that no student leaves his or her basic education. As stated at the beginning of the document, the consequences of leaving the education system early have a serious effect on the development possibilities at all levels: personal, social and employment.

- **The measures implemented can be models of good practices through their utility in keeping students within the education system** that would in all likelihood have left prior to obtaining minimum qualifications. Chief among these are the Curricular Diversification Programmes set up at schools and which are highly effective in keeping students within the system that might otherwise have left, as they were over the age of 16 and no longer obliged to continue their studies.

- **There are a percentage of schools that do not comply with the Inspectorate programme to ensure the right to education** as they do not send the monthly record sheets. As a consequence, the Inspectorate of Education has set up an improvement measure for the 2006/07 academic year called "synthesis of absenteeism" which guarantees quarterly monitoring and dispatch of cases at each and every one of the schools, even when there are no affected students. With regard to students, the purpose of this measure is to reinforce effective control of class attendance and analyse the trend of absentees; with regard to teaching staff, the aim is to reinforce coordination and communication tasks between the institutions involved.

- **Monitoring of the intervention measures with the student is not guaranteed**. The relationship with the student and their family to try to correct the absentee conduct is one of the strong points of the measures taken at the school's initiative; however, no period is guaranteed to carry out monitoring, analyse the procedures put in place and observe the consistency of the measures implemented to reverse the unwanted behaviour.

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