



# GR.DROPOUTS

*GR Drop outs is a two-year project taking place between 2011-2013. The overall aim of the project is to work with issues of truancy, absenteeism and dropouts in order to prevent long-term exclusion from society. The project is financed by the European Social Fund and is a strategic collaboration between the thirteen municipalities of the Gothenburg Region Association of Local Authorities (GR).*

## **Project background**

The negative trend with an increasing number of young adults who are not in education, employment or training is visible in Sweden as well as in Europe at large. The thirteen municipalities of the Gothenburg region have requested support in the proactive work with pupils who, for different reasons, choose not to attend school. The risk being that without education or employment the pupil may in the end become excluded from society.

Being a region for learning, it is necessary to use the cooperative strengths of the thirteen municipalities and make a joint effort to work against the dropout trend. GR Drop outs will serve the need of creating learning environments in a regional context. The transnational collaboration with Not School in England will create an opportunity for the exchange of experiences on a larger scale in Europe.

## **Project aims**

The project has four main aims:

- Mapping what is currently being done in the region regarding the subject of dropouts
- Taking stock of individual experiences from professionals working at secondary school level
- Developing and executing different forms of professional training
- Creating environments for learning that will lead to strategic influence and cooperation

## **Project description**

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Through cooperation, exchange of experiences and different forms of professional training, GR Drop outs is a unique opportunity to strengthen the preventive work with pupils aged 13-20 who are at risk of becoming dropouts. In the context of the

project, dropouts are defined as pupils aged 13-20 who have a high absence rate.

### Project activities

GR Drop outs aims at counteracting the negative trend of pupils dropping out of school by working proactively with professional development and training. The first step in this process is mapping what is currently being done in the region on this subject. During the fall of 2011 a survey was carried out among the thirteen municipalities of the Gothenburg Region. A number of projects, models, organisations and routines were reviewed through 53 interviews, two web based surveys (one aimed at headmasters and one aimed at pupils who have dropped out of school) and meetings with thirteen school classes. By mapping what is currently being done regarding these issues a number of conclusions were drawn.

### Conclusions

**Organisation and structure:** It is important that schools work with issues of dropouts and truancy in an organised and structured manner. Collecting statistics regarding absence and presence in class is only the first step, the next step must be analysing these statistics to draw conclusions. Being aware of the general situation enables discovery of problematic behaviours at an early stage.

**Causes and actions:** In order to work effectively with issues of truancy, it is essential to find individual causes in order to implement the relevant form of actions for each pupil. Many schools need to improve their methods for finding individual causes for truancy.

**Cooperation and responsibilities:** It is essential that all relevant organisations work together to create the best opportunities for pupils to stay in school. This requires a sense of shared responsibility between these organisations.

**Dropouts and truants:** In the survey, it has become apparent that the pupils that are most difficult to help within the traditional school structures are those who have been absent from school during a long period of time or who have dropped out completely. A number of successful projects and methods that work with these pupils have focused on using digital tools and creating education from the individual pupil's interests and abilities.

**Promoting presence:** Meaningfulness is a key to encouraging pupils to stay in, or return to, school. By focusing on every individual, working with formative assessment and taking stock of EU's eight key competences for learning a more meaningful school environment can be created.

**Commitment and response:** How do we treat pupils who have been absent from school for a long time or on just a few occasions? This is an important question raised by several participants in the survey. Anti-discrimination and anti-bullying work is important, as well as the relationship between adults in school and pupils.

### The next step

The project GR Drop outs is about learning on several levels. In light of the current educational landscape it is necessary to change the outlook on formal and informal learning. It is also necessary to take a look at both the operative level and the management level within education. Being aware of the socio-economical perspective and the grounds for discrimination, the aim is to support the work within the region in creating a school that fits everyone and where no pupils will be excluded.

The knowledge and competence of entire organisations can be improved by taking stock of individual experience and knowledge from persons working successfully with young people at risk of becoming dropouts. Using the results and the conclusions of the survey, 1000 persons working with young people between 13 and 20 will be offered different types of training and education within this field.

This will be done in different ways, for example through workshops, lectures and networking activities. The training will include topics such as:

- Supporting schools' organisational development, for example when it comes to analysing statistics regarding absenteeism
- Supporting schools in learning new methods for preventive work
- Supporting schools with their systematic evaluation
- How to use formative assessment as part of an early discovery of problematic behaviour
- Helping schools develop ICT (information and communication technology) and digital skills in both pupils and teachers
- How to work with pupils who have neuropsychiatric diagnoses
- How to strengthen the teacher's role using leadership training
- How to validate informal learning that takes room outside of the classroom.

A digital platform will be created in the context of the project, for sharing experiences and knowledge. In order to further develop the regional co-operation, best practices will be presented and networking opportunities for schools will be created.

### About GR

The Gothenburg Region Association of Local Authorities (GR) is a co-operative organisation uniting thirteen municipalities in western Sweden. Combined, the population of these municipalities is 930 000. The task of the association is to promote co-operation across municipal borders and provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and experience within the region.

There are 230 private and public schools for pupils aged 13-20 within the region.



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