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## Municipal Second Chance School: a new socio-educational service to combat early school leaving

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**The Municipal Second Chance School was created as a new socio-educational service to combat school dropout and unemployment among adolescents and young people who are in a situation of vulnerability and educational exclusion. The service aims to train and integrate these young people so that they can create their own life project and return to the education system or undertake a professional project. This new service falls within the framework of the educational equality policies promoted during the 2015-2019 term of office, which offer educational opportunities to adolescents and young people in the city. This service has been promoted by Barcelona's Municipal Institute of Education, in collaboration with the Area of Social Rights. The service is presented in a pilot-test phase and is characterised by its comprehensive approach and individualised attention, especially in its tutorial activities and coordination with other city mechanisms which work with the city's most disadvantaged adolescents and young people.**

### 1. Presentation of the Municipal Second Chance School (EM2O)

There are few mechanisms that enable the reintegration of young people<sup>3</sup> who dropped out of school early and who have other social variables to take into account in addition to education.

The Municipal Second Chance School, promoted by Barcelona's Municipal Institute of Education in collaboration with the Area of Social Rights, was created as a new socio-educational service for adolescents and young people who are in a situation of vulnerability and educational exclusion.<sup>4</sup> The service aims to train and integrate these young people so that they can create their own life project and return to the education system or undertake a professional project that will help them to find a job. The aim of this new service is to help reduce the rate of early school leaving (ESL) and it falls within the framework of the educational equality policies that offer educational opportunities to adolescents and young people in the city.

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1. Project Manager at the Manager's office of the Municipal Institute of Education (IMEB)

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3. Young people are considered to be members of the population between the ages of 12 and 25. Adolescents are considered to be members of the population between the ages of 12 and 16.

4. The concept of educational exclusion includes educational phenomena from the perspective of rights and social justice. It highlights the fact that the extent of educational cover is not sufficient to guarantee the right to education for all children and young people. The fact of being excluded or included in the system not only means access, but also the process and the results, of educational experiences and the acquisition of knowledge (Bonal, 2012).

## 2. Early school leaving

Reducing the early school leaving rate is one of the priorities of the current educational agenda, both for international bodies (the European Union, the Organisation for Cooperation and Economic Development, UNESCO, etc.) and state, regional and local governments. And it is not surprising, given the large quantity of resources dedicated to it, that it is still a major educational and social problem. ESL is a concept that can be defined from various perspectives. In the official environment of the EU, it is defined as: “The percentage of the population between the ages of 18 and 24 that have achieved, at most, the first stage of secondary education, compared to the whole population of the same age group.”<sup>5</sup>

In Spain and in Catalonia, ESL affects nearly 17% of young people, a percentage that is much higher than the average for the European Union, which is 10% (according to Eurostat<sup>6</sup> and Idescat<sup>7</sup> sources) and a long way from the targets set by the EU.

However, the compulsory secondary education (ESO) graduation rates have significantly improved over the last decade, reaching the current rate of 88.6%.<sup>8</sup>

## 3. The profile of young people in an ESL situation

Deciding whether or not to continue studying after completing compulsory education (which is until the age of 16 in Spain and Catalonia) depends on many factors, including the characteristics of the young person and their family environment (socio-economic status, gender, origin, etc.), but also the dynamics of the education centres themselves and the type of support provided for the transition to post-compulsory education, etc.

These are young people who have experienced a series of failures. Demotivated young people who do not believe in themselves, who have normalised a stereotyped social labelling —the *ni-nis*— [neither-nors] and who encounter many difficulties in their personal and social development. As Aina Tarabini says, they do not feel they are part of the educational institution; what they are studying doesn't make sense to them and they believe that studying “isn't for them”.<sup>9</sup> The factors that characterise young people who leave school early include:

- lagging behind in most areas of the curriculum,
- problems of self-esteem and confidence in their own abilities,
- being highly demotivated in terms of education,
- an inability to exercise educational, social or employment skills,
- rejecting school,
- absenteeism,
- disruptive behaviour and
- the risk of presenting serious addictive behaviour.

Various resources have been coordinated to combat ESL for quite some time, with notable success, including the Barcelona Education Consortium's Guidance Service - Youth Plan, which focuses particularly on the transition between the compulsory and post-compulsory stages. However, there continues to be a large number of young people for whom these resources are not sufficient and who end up dropping out of education. For these young people, other, more intensive educational and also cultural resources are required. Resources characterised by a comprehensive approach, assistance that is intensive and sustained over time. The Municipal

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5. <http://ensenyament.gencat.cat/ca/departament/estadistiques/indicadors/europeus/abandonament-prematur/>

6. [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=t2020\\_40&plugin=1](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=t2020_40&plugin=1)

7. <https://www.idescat.cat/indicadors/?id=ue&n=10101>

8. <http://ensenyament.gencat.cat/web/.content/home/departament/estadistiques/indicadors/sistema-educatiu/rendiment-escolar/a0711.xlsx>

9. [https://www.fbofill.cat/sites/default/files/IB\\_65\\_abandonamentescolar\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.fbofill.cat/sites/default/files/IB_65_abandonamentescolar_WEB.pdf)

Second Chance School (EM2O) aims to approach the problem using a holistic strategy in order to fill this gap and provide a solution for these young people.

#### 4. Second Chance Schools

The concept of second chance schools (E2O) was spawned by an initiative described in 1995, in the *White Paper on Education and Training. Teaching and learning, towards the learning society*, which was published by the European Commission. One of the main objectives was “to offer young people who are on the verge of being, or already are, excluded from the education system the best opportunities for training and the best context for acquiring self-confidence, based on three main ideas: innovative training to reinforce basic skills, support in social aspects and practical experience in associated companies”<sup>10</sup>.

The first E2O experience at a European level was initiated in France in 1997, with the school in Marseilles. It now has a network of 130 centres identified as “écoles de la 2e Chance”, many of which have been up and running for over ten years<sup>11</sup>. These centres offer personalised solutions to young people who have dropped out of the school system without having any academic qualifications in order to get them into employment. They have major support from local and regional administrations and close ties with business sectors. These business sectors provide the young people with the opportunity of work placements and pave the way for entering the job market.

Other countries that have also developed Second Chance Schools include Germany, Denmark, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Ireland, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal and Sweden<sup>12</sup>. In the United States there are a variety of initiatives that are similar to the second chance concept, including iPASS<sup>13</sup> (focused on continuing studies after the High School stage) or some *Charter Schools*<sup>14</sup>, such as the John V. Lindsay Wildcat Academy Charter School.<sup>15</sup>

The first initiatives in Spain date back to the 1980s and include a strong social component to help combat the exclusion of young people in risk situations, against a background of extreme economic crisis. They include Peñasal Kooperatiba,<sup>16</sup> in the Basque Country, and the Fundació Ilundain<sup>17</sup> in the Autonomous Community of Navarre. They all began as non-profit private initiatives. Later on, in 2004 in Catalonia, the Fundació El Llindar began its work in Cornellà de Llobregat. El Llindar is an organisation that promotes alternative and innovative educational and professional training activities for young people between the ages of 12 and 25 who, due to their personal fragility and a history of failure and dropping out, are unsuited to the various regulated education offers<sup>18</sup>.

In 2016, the Spanish Association of Second Chance Schools was constituted, with the aim of providing solutions for all young people without jobs or qualifications in Spain, by means of developing a national model of second chance schools (E2O). It was promoted by the Fundació Federico Ozanam, the Fundació Tomillo, the Peñasal Kooperatiba, the Fundació Adsis, the Fundació El Llindar and the Fundació Proyecto Don Bosco. It currently has over thirty associated organisations. This association has defined protocols that make it possible to identify and recognise second chance schools, through their own accreditation process.<sup>19</sup> There are five accredited schools in Catalonia.

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10. <https://publications.europa.eu/es/publication-detail/-/publication/d0a8aa7a-5311-4eee-904c-98fa541108d8/language-es>

11. <https://reseau-e2c.fr/>

12. [http://www.e2c-europe.org/images/e2c/documents/List\\_of\\_members.pdf](http://www.e2c-europe.org/images/e2c/documents/List_of_members.pdf)

13. <https://strongstart.org/why-a-strong-start/about>

14. <https://charterschoolcenter.ed.gov/charter-schools-usa>

15. <https://www.jvlwildcat.org/>

16. <http://www.fundacion-ilundain.com/breve-historia/>

17. <http://www.ellindar.org/que-som/>

18. <https://www.e2oespana.org/>

19. [https://www.slideshare.net/Barcelona\\_cat/joves-amb-necessitat-dinsercieducativa-](https://www.slideshare.net/Barcelona_cat/joves-amb-necessitat-dinsercieducativa-)

## 5. Barcelona's Municipal Second Chance School Project

The design of this new service was based on the following aspects:

- The conclusions of the working group on the Second Chance Model for Barcelona, organised by the BCN Vocational Training Foundation (2017-2018).
- The study “Young people who need work or educational placement. A socio-demographic analysis for the City of Barcelona”, a report produced by the Vocational Training Observatory, belonging to the BCN Vocational Training Foundation (May 2017)<sup>20</sup>.
- The report on the definition of an E2O model that the City Council commissioned the Spanish Association of Second Chance Schools to produce (AEE2O) (2018).
- The new opportunity centres project (CNO), from the Catalan Employment Service (SOC) (2015-2017)<sup>21</sup>.
- Knowledge gained from the projects developed by the Escola Pia de Catalunya<sup>22</sup>, the Fundació Adsis<sup>23</sup>, the Fundació El Llindar, the Fundació Ilundain Haritz Berri, the Fundació Intermèdia<sup>24</sup>, the Peñascal Kooperatiba and Salesians Sant Jordi<sup>25</sup>.

## 6. Why the name *school* and *chances*?

The name *school* may cause some controversy, given that it is not a regulated centre. The decision to call it a *school* arises from the wish to include this new service in the education system, as one more educational alternative. The school is within a facility conceived as a place for reconnecting young people with the education system, with learning. We call it a *school*, but it is obviously not a regulated centre. Although there is extensive literature on second chances in the area of compensatory education policies, which even mentions Decree 150/2017 on educational assistance for students as part of an inclusive education system<sup>26</sup>, no administration has formulated a regulatory framework in which they can be developed.

*Chances* in plural [in Catalan], because educational life is very long and has infinite opportunities. The school makes it possible to offer flexible training itineraries that are personalised and have continuity. This helps adolescents and young people who are in a situation of fragility, vulnerability and with special difficulties to reconnect with society.

## 7. Description of the new service

The EM2O began life as a municipal service. The management of the centre was allocated through a services contract that was put out to tender in December 2018, and was awarded in mid May 2019 to the TBA (temporary business association) formed by Fundació El Llindar and Salesians Sant Jordi. These are two of the leading organisations in Spain with regard to their respective second chance school projects (see Point 5). The service is located in a facility that has been completely refurbished, at Carrer de Capella 10, in Navas, a neighbourhood in the district of Sant Andreu.

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20. <http://calassanci.escolapia.cat/>

21. <https://www.fundacionadsis.org/cat>

22. <http://calassanci.escolapia.cat/>

23. <https://www.fundacionadsis.org/ca>

24. <https://www.fundaciointermedia.org/>

25. <https://www.salesianssantjordi.org>

26. [https://dogc.gencat.cat/ca/pdogc\\_canals\\_interns/pdogc\\_resultats\\_fitxa/?action=fitxa&documentId=799722&language=ca\\_ES](https://dogc.gencat.cat/ca/pdogc_canals_interns/pdogc_resultats_fitxa/?action=fitxa&documentId=799722&language=ca_ES)

Its activities began in September 2019 with thirty young people, and it will be expanded over the next two years (extendible for one more year) until reaching a maximum of ninety young people. The EM2O aims to return young school leavers to the educational system. We understand this return to mean that, when the young people finish the EM2O programme, they are able to begin post-compulsory training or enter the job market, having been provided with tools that improve their conditions for beginning their professional lives.

Since the beginning of the crisis, unemployment has affected more those young people with less studies: the difference between the unemployment rate of young people who, at the most, have the compulsory education and those who have post-compulsory education, is higher and it is almost the triple (39% and 14.3%, respectively). Education is, therefore, a key element in having a relatively safer position in the labor market<sup>27</sup>. It is because of that that the E2O project focusses on adolescents and young people between the ages of 16 and 25 who find themselves in any of these situations: people who have left school without graduating from ESO, or have graduated from ESO but then stopped studying and are now unemployed without any professional qualifications, and very importantly, that they voluntarily wish to participate in this service.

## 8. Work methodology

This project focuses its deployment around people, who are understood as being active subjects that receive personalised attention. What are known as *subjective methodologies* are applied, which are characterised by the following aspects:

- Through proximity and by listening, being aware of the emotional connection and understanding that the team of education professionals are guides and companions. This is why it is important to have a team of multi-disciplinary professionals from the world of education, psychology, education science, free education, technical-professional training and job placement.
- Through respect and recognition, based on the premise that adolescents and young people are fully-fledged citizens.
- Through the personalisation of learning, based on the idea that there are many ways of learning and that there are also many chances to make a mistake.

The school offers a two-year programme that is based on six main lines of action that do not necessarily have to be sequential:

1. Diagnosis, empowerment and definition of a personal work plan for each young person. This first line of action has three objectives:

- Diagnosing and assessing the young person's situation in its entirety.
- Empowering the young person to recover their self-esteem, helping them to identify their potential abilities and express them. Discovering their weak points and how to overcome them.
- Defining a personal work plan (PWP). The adolescent or young person makes decisions based on their potential abilities and desires and is capable of sustaining their training process over time in a self-sufficient way.

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27. [http://ejoventut.gencat.cat/web/.content/e-joventut/recursos/tipus\\_de\\_rekurs/documentacio/arxiu/document/informes\\_epa/Informe\\_EPA\\_1r\\_trimestre\\_2019.pdf](http://ejoventut.gencat.cat/web/.content/e-joventut/recursos/tipus_de_rekurs/documentacio/arxiu/document/informes_epa/Informe_EPA_1r_trimestre_2019.pdf)

In this line of action, the figure of the tutor is of fundamental importance, and has the goal of developing personalised educational support throughout the time the young person is at the school.

2. Guidance based on what has been defined in the personal work plan. The objective is to put the personal work plan (PWP) into practice. To this end, the methodology applied is based on the following:

- Guidance, assistance and support for the young person in their integration into the education system or their inclusion in the job market.
- The young person undertaking the appropriate training

3. Training. This training consists of two basic blocks:

3.1. Training in basic and cross-cutting skills that include working on personal and social skills, with emphasis on the set of skills, abilities and attitudes that are necessary for responding to educational and employment situations of varying complexity. And also the promotion of health actions (with the aim of raising awareness about healthy eating habits and prevention of drug-taking, among others), affective-sexual education with a gender perspective or the prevention of abusive relationships and gender violence.

3.2. Technical-professional training based on the personal work plan that each young person defines. Offering the young people a variety of options, using own means or those of collaborating organisations, that may range from “Job taster sessions” (which provide practical knowledge of professions) or training and insertion programmes (PFI), to professional certificates or preparation for gaining access to regulated vocational training courses. There are also plans to create “bespoke training” that may be requested by financial stakeholders in the territory and which provides job placement opportunities. This training should aim to provide knowledge and skills for undertaking jobs that are not currently listed in the Department of Education or the Catalan Employment Service catalogue. This may be on the initiative of companies or training organisations to cover specific jobs or emerging sectors.

All of these training courses will be planned from the perspective that the young people can move around the city and make use of existing training resources in order to achieve the objectives listed in their personal work plans. The aim of this training is for the young people to reach the goal of gaining access to a longer, recognised training course, but at the same time, to support and sustain their process once they have gained access, through follow-up carried out by the designated tutor or tutors.

Work on the life project of each young person, part of their personal work plan, also includes a series of activities that will create ties with the surrounding area or territory. The EM2O is a school that is outward looking, enabling it to extend beyond the walls of the facility and gain access to the educational potential and resources offered in the surrounding area.

4. Learning activities and service for the community. The objective is to promote the young person's social participation and create ties to their closest community in order to exercise full citizenship and develop their civic commitment. The young people will work on the real needs in the area, with the aim of improving it.

5. Leisure activities and support for training. These activities have a teaching purpose linked to informal education, as an instrument for transmitting concepts, values and skills to the young people. On the one hand, it will promote healthy leisure activities and on the other, it will promote

experimentation in order to create a positive relationship with the learning process, favour time organisation and management (knowing how to differentiate between the times and places for work and leisure) and prevent absenteeism and dropping out.

6. Monitoring and evaluation. Once their integration into the education system or job market is completed, the work methodology will focus on ongoing follow-up to ensure that the transition towards greater self-sufficiency and independence is successful.

In addition to these lines of action, there will also be a focus on working with their families. The objective is to foster the family's connection with, and involvement in, the educational process of the adolescents and young people. As part of the work methodology, the aim is to place special emphasis on the relational aspect of EM2O, given that this will be one of the main elements involved in being able to approach and assist these adolescents and young people.

In this sense, coordinating and working with other city stakeholders, especially in the education, employment and healthcare sectors, will be a vital aspect of EM2O's actions (Mental-health plan, Youth Plan - Barcelona Education Consortium, Youth Centres, Barcelona Activa). This coordination and joint work is intended to deal with relational aspects, with the aim of ensuring the comprehensive nature of the assistance and improving interventions with the adolescents and young people. Regarding relations with the territory's organisations and institutions (local resident associations, prevention services, youth facilities, leisure education organisations, companies, etc.), these will help to improve the opportunities and living conditions of the adolescents and young people.

The benefits or potentialities of working with other players and resources include, primarily, the fact that they make it possible to improve knowledge and analysis of the reality and favour a more global vision, an overall view of the situation of the city's young people. On the other hand, it favours mutual knowledge between various sectors, stakeholders, organisations and professionals and, in some cases, this facilitates the creation of synergies and exchange and collaboration relationships among professionals, services and organisations. In this way, it is possible to avoid the duplication of resources and efforts, thereby optimising capacity for impact and action.

## **9. The challenges facing EM2O**

EM2O is just starting its journey and it is facing challenges that can be summarised in the following:

- Raising awareness of the fact that the adolescents and young people who are outside both the education and employment system are not a homogeneous group and require individualised actions in order to find solutions to their situations.
- Assessing the impact of the service (how many young people define their own life project and return to the education system or obtain a professional project).
- Ensuring the EM2O is identified as one more public resource within the range of resources dedicated to early school leaving in the city, a service that is well connected with the other educational, social, health and employment resources.

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