




PREVENTING EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING THROUGH DIGITAL STORY MAPPING

CALL TO ACTION



The background of the entire page is a light red, stylized map pattern with various lines and shapes representing streets and geographical features.

my
story
map



CALL TO ACTION

Addressed to school headmasters, teachers and educators, this document introduces a collection of tools developed through the combination of formal and non-formal education. It provides orientation and guidance for designing actions, inside and outside of the school environment, aimed at fighting the phenomenon of Early School Leaving.





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TABLE OF CONTENTS



1. My Story Map approach	3
1.1 Why?	4
1.2 Who?	5
1.3 What for?	6
2. Fighting early school leaving with My Story Map	8
2.1 My personal story map	9
2.2 My didactic story map	10
3. My Story Map Tools	12
Study: Telling digital stories to fight against Early School Leaving	12
Learning Module: How to tell a (life) story / Learning Module: Media production skills	12
Analysis of Impact: Digital Story Mapping in practice	13
Storywall: Online platform of digital life stories	13
Learning Module: Preventing Early School Leaving through Digital Story Mapping	14
Call To Action: Preventing Early School Leaving through Digital Story Mapping	14






1. MY STORY MAP APPROACH

The approach of “My Story Map” is the result of an Erasmus+ strategic partnership project for innovation in the field of School Education, implemented between 2017 and 2020 by 6 partners from Italy, France, Spain, Belgium and Austria. The project was aimed at using the potential of Digital Story Mapping for educational strategies that support prevention (better access to inclusive and basic quality education), intervention (tutoring, support, mentoring) and compensation (reengagement in learning and identification of new paths of education and training) of ESL - Early School Leaving.

Among the numerous projects and initiatives that have been implemented to prevent, intervene against and compensate ESL at national and European level, the approach of “My Story Map” aims to bring innovation in several regards:

-  **cross-sectoral approach:** it develops strategies which can be received and implemented by schools, vocational training institutions, life-long learning centres, youth centres and youth organisations
-  **application of pupil-focused strategies:** it makes use of the motivating potential of new media and the media preferences of young people;

-  **focus on teachers, trainers, educators:** it develops relevant training modules designed specifically to prevent and tackle the phenomenon of ESL and it combines in a synergic way actions of prevention, intervention and compensation which can be applied within formal and non-formal context;
-  **extra-curricular activities:** the informal learning approach of its actions is fit to meet the pre-conditions of successful educational work with its public, as it raises self-esteem, improves motivation and supports learning processes;
-  **personalised learning:** the digital story-maps can be highly customized and thus offer very personal learning pathways which are designed on the specific learning needs of every individual

1.1. Why?

My Story Map developed an educational strategy, based on the pedagogical use of the methodology of Digital Story Mapping, which aims:

- to explore factors of preventing drop-out rates from school through Digital Story Mapping;
- to enhance communication and digital competencies, two fundamental key competencies, both for early-school leavers and those at risk of Early School Leaving;
- to raise awareness of the reasons of ESL and for the personal consequences of this decision on one's own life;
- to foster an aware analysis of one's own educational pathway in order to redefine life objectives in terms of both educational possibilities and job opportunities;
- to make available tools documenting and advising against Early School Leaving, usable also by future generations of students at risk of dropping out;
- to contribute to reduce drop-out rates from school;

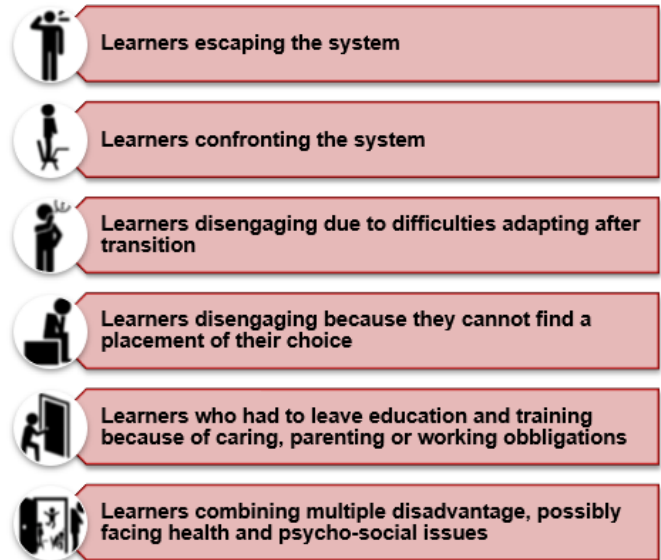


1.2. Who?

There are several definitions of “at risk” students, each one with its own perspective and specific criteria, which can be suitable to some contexts and less to others. Paradoxically, we can say that every student is at risk (except, perhaps, those few and lucky exceptions who can count on excellent abilities and a supportive environment) because being “at risk” doesn’t imply any more exclusively school failure in terms of grades and evaluation but, in the wider sense, failure or limited development of students’ very own skills and talents.

The profiles of young people who do not continue in education and training vary. While some experience difficult personal situations that lead them to quitting education early, others are similar to those who eventually persist in education.

The Cedefop study (2016b) identified six profiles of early leavers and learners at risk of early leaving. These profiles illustrate how different risk factors can interact, thus leading to ESL. The profiles show different levels of disengagement and different types of challenge. Professionals who design measures to tackle ESL need to reflect on the specific characteristics of their target group/s and select actions accordingly. This approach also requires policy-makers to refine and target their responses.



Source: extraction from Cedefop study (2016b)

According to the final report of the Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving of the European Commission (2013), developing the capacity of school staff to create and maintain learning environments that support at-risk pupils is of crucial importance for reducing ESL. However, teachers need support to develop and adapt different methodologies and skills to meet the needs of individual pupils. The report points out specifically how, as a condition of successful learning, teachers need to strengthen their role as “facilitators of learning”.



1.3. What for?

In order to move in the direction of becoming “facilitators of learning”, teachers are expected to calibrate their action, bearing in mind the new cognitive styles that young people are showing today. The use of new technologies can be a valuable tool in order to promote learning and create a virtual environment that can facilitate the exchange of ideas, materials and information. It's in this kind of environments that students become actors and co-actors in the learning process, especially in a moment in which many young people at risk of ESL lack a sense of identity or connection with the school.

My Story Map's approach identified that the most valuable and significant learning outcomes improved by the activities with Digital Story Mapping are:

- 📍 helping to maintain the motivation of participants;
- 📍 stimulating reflection of past life choices and their consequences;
- 📍 stimulating reflection on future and personal goals;
- 📍 supporting the improvement of public speaking, empathy and listening skills;
- 📍 improving self-awareness and self-confidence;
- 📍 improving digital skills;

Combining together the potential offered by the methodology of Digital Story Mapping, an holistic pedagogical approach and the main 10 key competences identified by the World Economic Forum in the “Future of Job's Report”, My Story Map outlines and identifies 10 main areas (divided into 50 specific competences), which can be developed through the use of the learning materials provided.

The areas cover a very wide range of competences, from digital to social, organisational, personal and interpersonal. More specifically, it has been tested how the most intensive competence development is registered in the following areas:

1. COMMUNICATE MEANINGFULLY;
2. DIGITAL CONTENT CREATION;
3. PERSONAL AWARENESS AND RESPONSIBILITY;
4. WORKING WITH OTHERS;

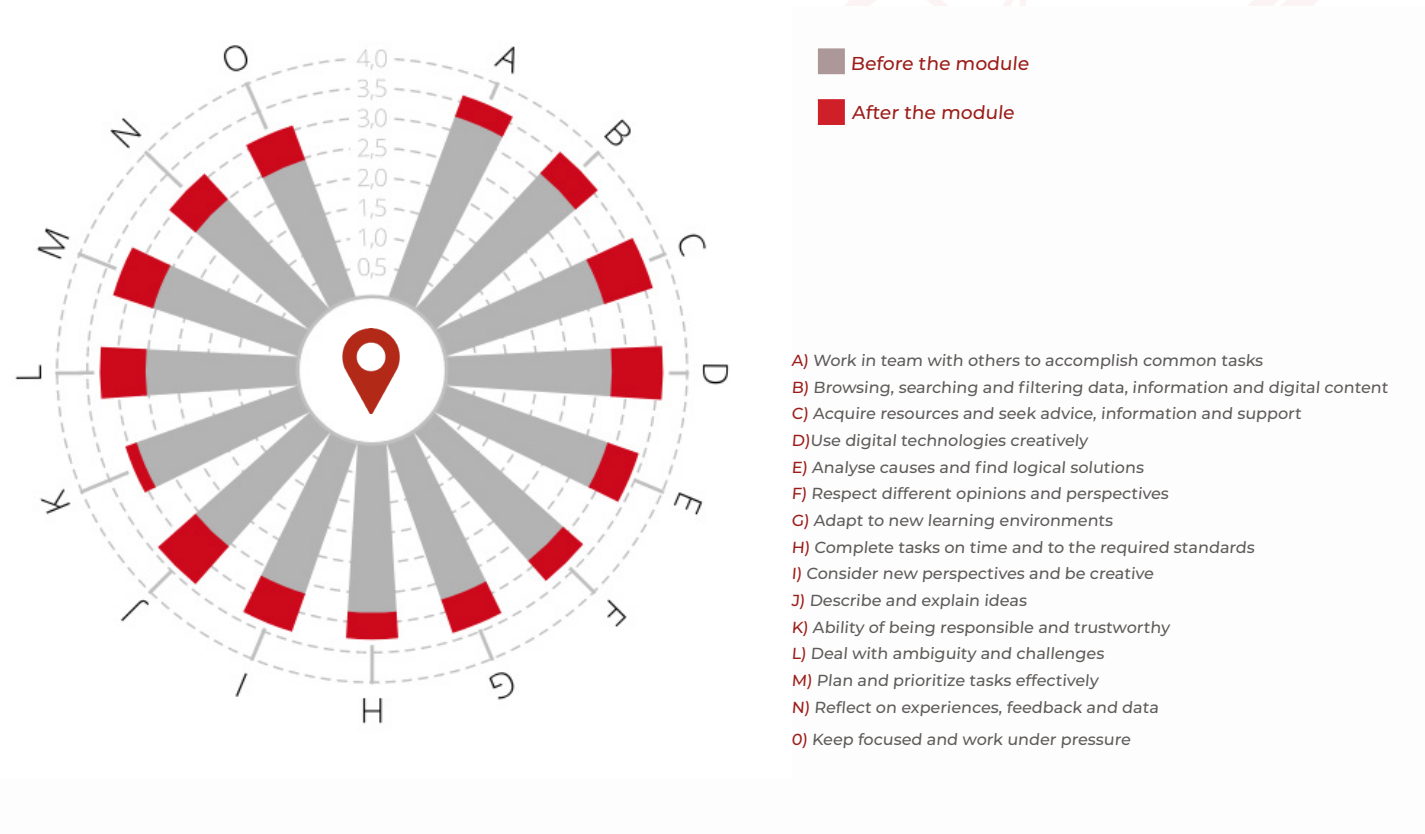
My Story Map's approach provides youngsters the opportunity to practice talking about themselves, opening up and making connections between different events and elements of their lives. Personal reflection for most of them is a process that seems very complex and they are not easily willing to engage in it. Especially the reflection about one's own strengths - looking up at their talents, qualities and resources - is perceived as extremely difficult, but once they manage to look into it, they re-discover a sense of self-worthiness which is an extremely important milestone to achieve in terms of personal development.

They also develop the ability to look at one's own future, thinking in small short-term objectives, identifying a main goal and working it out, picturing the different steps that can lead to its achievement. This can be also translated in terms of development and improvement of their organisation skills, as they become more capable to structure their work and summarize their thoughts and ideas.

Listening and learning from each other is also one of the main learning outcomes of the My Story Map action. Participants, in most cases, are genuinely interested in hearing each other's stories and be supportive and attentive.

The fact of using a digital story-map to analyse causes and find logical solutions, testing one's own experiences in different areas, being able to draw on the opinions of other and carrying out a task with a group of peers to do something together, gives a different value to the idea of working with others. In this framework the individual isn't led to see the others in a competitive or comparative way, but re-discovers oneself included as an active and essential element.

Learning **improvement** on ability of key competences



Source: extraction from the analysis of the youngsters' self-assessment results collected during the piloting phase


The methodology proposed leads the teachers to adopt an attitude that is closer to the one of coaching, of facilitating, giving progressively more and more space to the selfdetermination of the students.


Teachers believe that My Story Map offers an alternative study model that has the potential to change not only the attitude but also the role of the student in the classroom, strengthening the student's ability to work alone and in groups and, at the same time, increasing their relational skills and improving their communication abilities.

2. FIGHTING EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING WITH MY STORY MAP

The methodology of Digital Story Mapping is based on the use of web applications that are able to combine geospatial data with narrative text, photos and multimedia, including video, in order to visualize a theme or sequential events with attractive designs. In the framework of My Story Map, the map is a tool that allows users to look at something from a different point of view, to connect things. It is conceived as a way to share knowledge and pass on information, to interact and engage with the other in order to show people things that they could not see otherwise.

My Story Map approach adopts Digital Story Mapping in order to engage youngsters in a process of contextualization and creation of their own narratives, while focusing as well on the production aspect, so that they become at the same time:

 **producers of content:** they have the chance to discover what is hidden behind the multimedia products they interact with on a daily basis, creatively exploring how they are made;

 **users of content:** they are no longer only reading or listening to a story, but through the interaction with it, they are able to develop an ownership of the story as well.

There are now many different existing platforms that enable people to tell stories through maps, such as Odyssey JS, Story-Maps JS, MapStory, Cov-On and others. The main platform chosen for the creation of the digital story-maps within the framework of My Story Map workshop is ESRI Story Maps.



2.1. My personal story map

An action of My Story Map is a modular 6-sessions workshop, based on a mix of both experiential and theoretical activities. During the workshop, young people engage in a pathway focused on Digital Story Mapping and are encouraged to investigate and organise in a digital story-map flow the context, the causes and the reasons that led them to the idea/decision of dropping out of the educational and/or training system.

The workshop experience is divided into 4 phases, thus covering an amount from 20 to 30 hours in total. It is designed for a small group framework, however the concept of modularity is strictly linked to the idea of a flexible learning curriculum, in which nothing is fixed for good, but where there is the opportunity at all levels to choose and combine contents in different ways according to the context of each particular learning situation

Prevention dimension

The work with young people distinguishes itself by a high level of ambiguity and therefore requires an approach that allows the acknowledgement of the specific backgrounds and the development of the uniqueness of every single person. The workshops is based on the principle of learning inclusion and it provides a wide variety of educational approaches and tools, able to stimulate different learning styles and to activate very different psychological and cognitive channels throughout all its four phases. The learners are engaged in opportunities for discussion and comparison, group work, simulations, outdoor experiences, moments of reflection and sharing, with the idea to promote an experience as rich and diversified as possible.

Intervention dimension

By asking young people to engage in a process of personal storytelling, the workshop allows them to give meaning to an event, a situation, a period of their life. Pedagogically, this way of enunciating one's own story offers the possibility of getting to know oneself in a deeper way, increasing one's own personal awareness and fostering individual empowerment. By engaging in this process, young people ultimately learn not only how to identify and describe facts and events, but how to make sense of them. The workshop is designed in order to build an environment of safety and trust in which reactions and responses, whether individual or collective, become the object of careful evaluation, of listening, of respect, of self-evaluation.

Compensation dimension

The workshop actively exploits the element of fun as a channel through which learning can be perceived both as an opportunity and as a possible personal choice, so to increase the potential for learning to be included among the possible future pathways of the young participants. The experience, through a specific system of self-assessment, encourages young people to regain the ownership of their learning process and, most of all, of an heightened sense of self-awareness. It promotes a shift towards learnercentred learning in which the young people themselves are in charge to set and define their own goals and the steps required to meet them



2.2. My didactic story map

An action of My Story Map is a multi-sessions module that integrates elements of nonformal learning through the methodology of Digital Story Mapping within the didactic curriculum. The module aims to promote in the students a sense of ownership and reappropriation of the educational content and the learning experience, through the process of creation of a digital story-map on a given topic and/or subject chosen by the teacher from the educational curricula.

The implementation structure of the module is designed to cover a total from 15 to 25 hours for the entire learning curriculum, including hours dedicated to individual and autonomous students' study and production at home. The module is suitable to be implemented in either an individual or a collective framework.

Prevention dimension

In the module, the teacher has the task of creating, through a collaborative didactic approach based on group and/or individual work, the learning units that serve as a basis for personal study. It does so by working on the concept of self-directed learning where the student, once the topic has been selected, is the one who is in charge of designing what could be one's own personal re-elaborated version of the topic through means of expression related to the world of digital technology. In this way the student learns to deconstruct a set of information and then reconstruct it on the basis of one's own logical connections and intuition, searching for one's own learning style.

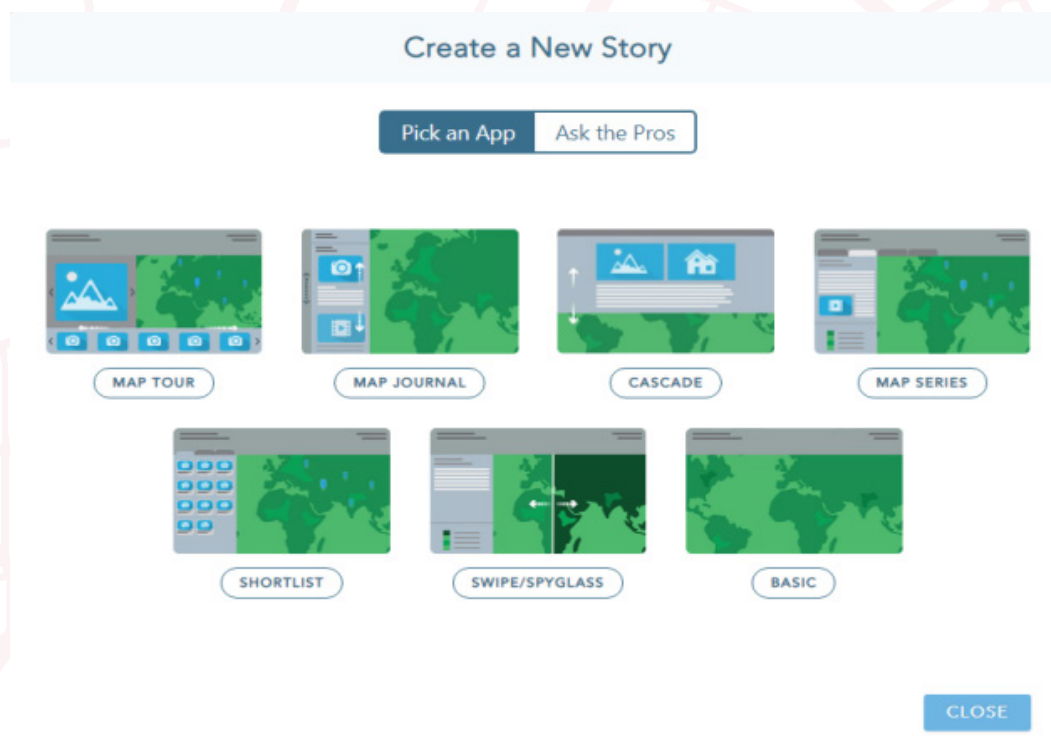
Intervention dimension

Starting from the intuition that the most delicate moment of the didactic process is not accessing the content but their application and re-elaboration, the reversed, upsidedown teaching approach presented in the module represents an opportunity to redefine the role of the teachers. Here the teacher, rather than indiscriminately introducing notions not assimilated by all in the same way, takes on a more complex role that supports the "extraction" of the potential from each student. Within the module, teaching that fosters motivation to learn is a thoughtful process of aligning student choices so that students see the value of these choices as tools for meeting their learning needs and goals.

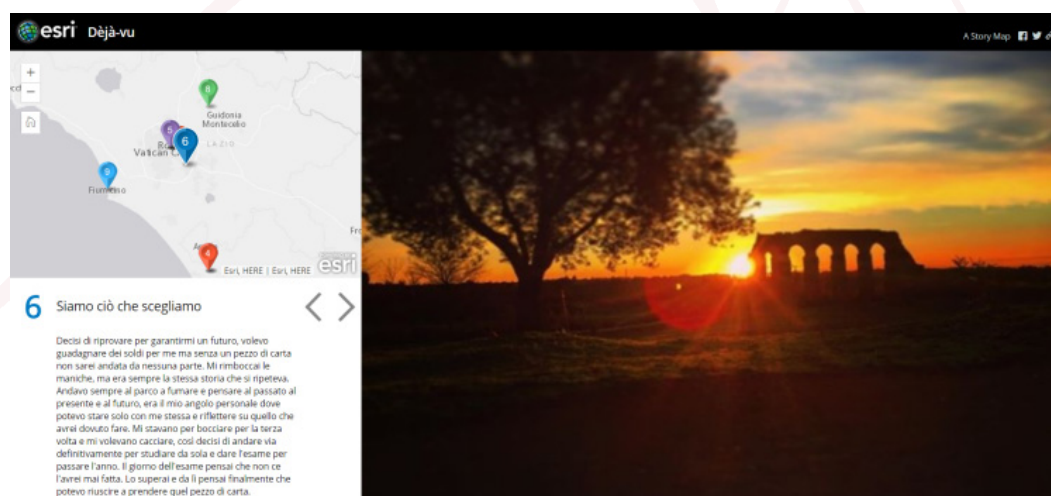
Compensation dimension

The use digital story-maps represents a different way of learning in which students get involved and act first hand using their experience and creativity to construct their own learning process, using their knowledge and skills to create products such as photos, videos, digital stories, multimedia presentations which can enrich their curriculum. Thanks to a process of interactive participation through which is easier to observe, learn, process, explain and memorize concepts, students are made the protagonists of the didactic action.





Source: ArcGIS Classic Story Maps™ builder



Source: Amy's digital storymap "Dèjà-vu" (<https://arcg.is/1t8Dmm>)

3. MY STORY MAP TOOLS

STUDY: Telling digital stories to fight against Early School Leaving



The study sums up the results of national and transnational desk-based research activities and it focuses on four key areas:

- firstly the current situation regarding prevention of, intervention against, and compensation of early leavers from education and training in the countries participating in the project (IT, AT, BE, FR, ES) and in other European countries and at European level;
- secondly, the study examines some solutions and progress made within the strategic framework Education and Training 2020 and synthesises the present state of research on the potential for storytelling and Digital Story Mapping to engage young people at risk (Marta, 2015);
- thirdly, the study introduces teaching and training opportunities in the partner countries, specific to the target groups;
- finally, the study explores policies at different scales, strategies for engagement, the reported use of tools, pedagogical approaches, success stories and recommendations.

LEARNING MODULE: How to tell a (life) story

LEARNING MODULE: Media production skills



The two learning modules have been combined in a single booklet, which is organized and divided into five main parts:

- the methodology of personal stories through Digital Story Mapping;
- the overview of the workshop experience in terms of approach and structure, accompanied by the outline of the four learning phases; - the learning objectives, looking at the identified competences to be developed through the workshop and contextualising them into the frame of the work on Digital Story Mapping applied to Early School Leaving;
- the self-assessment, providing a format specifically designed around the identified learning objectives of the workshop and explaining how the outcomes of the self-assessment can be a resource for both the learners and the facilitators, providing an additional support in order to better understand how to design the workshop experience;
- the outline of all the learning materials for the face-to-face sessions which have been selected in order to respond and address the identified learning objectives, divided according to the content and purpose of each specific learning session.

The selection of the learning materials is based on a non-formal educational context, centred on the participants and their personal willingness to engage in a reality-oriented task with a real and tangible outcome.



ANALYSIS OF IMPACT: Digital Story Mapping in practice



The analysis of impact has been produced with the aim to show the findings of the implementation phase realised in Italy, Austria, France, Belgium and Spain of MSM workshops (My personal story-map) and involving 75 youngsters. In order to serve its purpose, the content of the analysis has been organized and divided into three main sections:

- the first outlines the methodological framework of the workshop, highlighting its most relevant qualities in relation to the work against Early School Leaving;
- the second contains the results of the implementation phase;
- the third examines the results and provides recommendations for the future use of the outcomes and better adaptability and transferability in the different sectors of school, non-formal education for youth, VET, and adult education

STORYWALL: Online platform of digital life stories (mystorywall.eu)



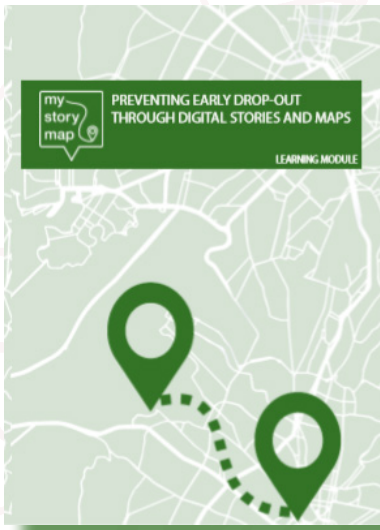
The Story Wall is the online exhibition room for the digital (life) story-maps realized by the young people involved in the international implementation phase of the MSM workshop (My personal story map). The platform is designed to pursue multiple purposes addressing different target groups:

- it enhances a product of self-awareness and nurture the self-confidence of the authors of the digital life stories (early leavers or young people at risk of drop out);
- it addresses other young people (peers) and encourages them to interact with the stories and the maps by sharing, liking, commenting, contributing, etc., allowing it to be spread online;
- it shows concretely to teachers how digital story-maps can be designed, which features they might include and how powerful can be the use of storymaps as a tool to prevent the issue of Early School Leaving;

NOTE FOR USE: the interface is multilingual (French, Italian, English, Spanish, Flemish and German), but the digital story-maps are available in the national language of the authors. The summary of their content is translated in all languages. Some of the stories may be listed as private under indication of the author(s).



LEARNING MODULE: Preventing Early School Leaving through Digital Story Mapping



The learning module divides and organizes its content into six main parts:

- the pedagogical framework, which sets the premises of the didactic approach envisioned by the module;
- the methodology of Digital Story Mapping, providing an overview and the deepening of the main working tool to be adopted during learning experience with the students;
- the overview of the module in terms of approach and structure, accompanied by the main guidelines for implementation;
- the learning objectives, looking at the identified competences to be developed through the module and contextualising them into the frame of the work on Digital Story Mapping applied to Early School Leaving;
- the evaluation strategy to be adopted in the module addressing both teachers and students;
- the outline of all the learning materials for the face-to-face sessions which have been selected in order to respond and address the identified learning objectives, divided according to the content and purpose of each specific learning phase.

The main elements of the module (My didactic story-map) are based on a single-disciplinary or interdisciplinary learning unit (didactic content) combined with principles of storytelling and digital storytelling applied to teaching.

CALL TO ACTION: Preventing Early School Leaving through Digital Story Mapping



A smart document designed to present My Story Map approach starting from the outcomes and lessons learned from the strategic partnership project. Addressed to school headmasters, teachers and educators, this document introduces a collection of specialised resources, developed for multiple purposes, and aimed at preventing and fighting Early School Leaving. It provides orientation and guidance for implementing actions, inside and outside of the school environment, and designing new ones with early leavers and those at risk of dropping out. The tools presented come from the combined contribution of formal and non-formal education practices, offering two different lines of intervention to tackle the phenomenon of ESL.

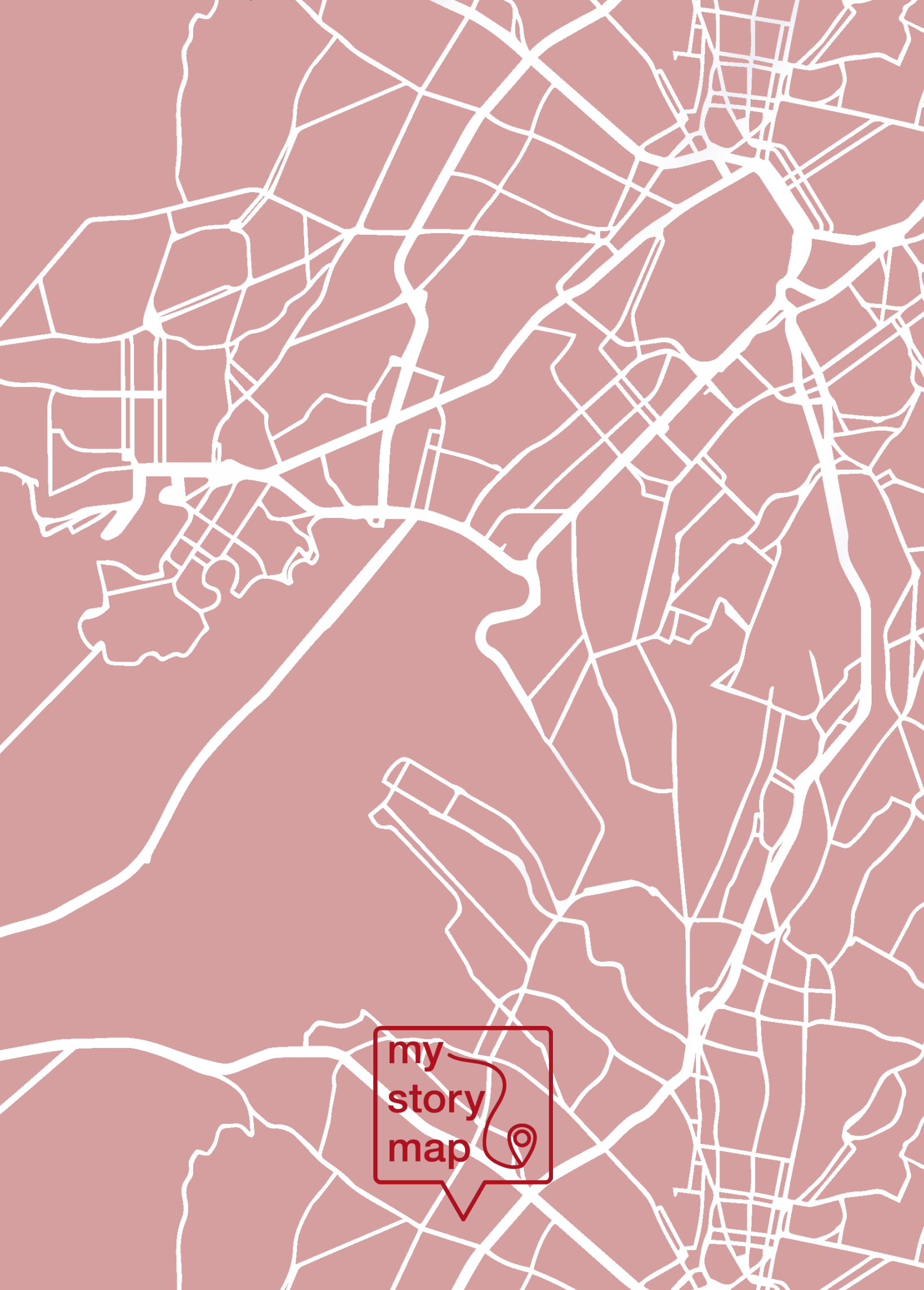


Online resources are available for download on
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