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RESEARCH PAPER

# Leaving education early: putting vocational education and training centre stage

Volume II: evaluating policy impact





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Volume II  
Evaluating policy impact

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Europe 123, 570 01 Thessaloniki (Pylea), GREECE  
PO Box 22427, 551 02 Thessaloniki, GREECE  
Tel. +30 2310490111, Fax +30 2310490020  
E-mail: [info@cedefop.europa.eu](mailto:info@cedefop.europa.eu)  
[www.cedefop.europa.eu](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu)

Joachim James Calleja, *Director*  
Micheline Scheys, *Chair of the Governing Board*



## Foreword

Early leaving from education and training (ELET) is linked to unemployment, social exclusion, and poverty. The fight against early leaving has been a priority for the EU since 2000 as part of the Lisbon strategy; reducing the share of early leavers aged 18 to 24 to below 10% by 2020 is an objective of the ET 2020 strategic framework. Data from 2014 show that Europe is only 0.9 percentage points from its target but that 4.4 million young people still did not complete upper secondary education. The data also show that the situation varies greatly from country to country. Further progress can only be achieved through better understanding and more active policies targeted at those most at risk.

Timely interventions to prevent early leaving are crucial. Learners at risk present distress signs before they actually leave school; if these signs are detected in time, there are more chances of retaining young people with relatively simple interventions, making it possible to get better results with fewer resources. Once learners drop out, and the longer they stay outside education and training, the more difficult it is to rejoin former classmates and the higher the chances that they will be involved in other activities, such as low-wage employment.

European statistics so far have only allowed quantification of overall early leaving from education and training; there are many questions that remain unanswered. How many early leavers come specifically from vocational education and training (VET) pathways? Why? How many of them return to education? How many chose VET as a second chance option? And how many graduate eventually? This two-volume study examines those questions, looks at solutions to early leaving in use across the EU, and offers input to policy-makers charged with tackling this problem.

While early leaving appears to be particularly acute for those enrolled in VET programmes, the study also shows that high participation rates in, and high graduation rates from, VET are often associated with low numbers of early leavers. VET can be part of the solution, retaining learners at risk of leaving education and training and bringing back those who have already left <sup>(1)</sup>.

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<sup>(1)</sup> See Cedefop's video on learners' testimonials on how VET has played a role in their decision to continue their studies and find a job.  
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/videos/role-vet-combatting-early-leaving> [accessed 17.8.2016].

Facing up to early leaving from education and training requires streamlining of existing initiatives and a strategic alliance between policy-makers, educators, employers, trade unions and civil society. European countries should not only strive for a lower rate of early leavers: we should also do our best so that education and training becomes relevant, meaningful and engaging to learners. The strategic importance of VET in attaining this goal is implicit in the *New skills agenda* for Europe, where the need for reinforced and updated skills features prominently. Cedefop will continue its support for Member States and, in 2017, will launch an electronic toolkit of guidelines, good examples of practice and tools to address early leaving, for policy-makers, professionals at provider level and policy evaluators.

Joachim James Calleja  
Director



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<sup>(2)</sup> An anonymous list of all interviewees, including information on country, organisation and job position/role, is available on request.

<sup>(3)</sup> A detailed list of workshop participants is available on request.

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## Executive summary

Early leaving from education and training (ELET) is understood at EU level as a failure to complete upper secondary education or a failure to gain qualifications or school leaving certificates. It can lead to a vicious cycle of unemployment, social exclusion and poverty, with costs for the individual and society that include reduced levels of economic activity, higher unemployment, poorer health outcomes and demands on state welfare systems.

The EU objective of reducing the share of early leavers to below 10% of young people aged 18 to 24 was first adopted as part of the Lisbon strategy and has been retained as one of the Europe 2020 headline targets. This Cedefop study focuses on the contribution that vocational education and training (VET) can make to reducing ELET. It is published in two volumes, the first of which looks to understand better the magnitude of early leaving from VET (ELVET). This second volume draws on examination of 337 initiatives across Europe that had the objective of reducing early leaving through VET. It aims to support national and EU policy- and decision-makers in improving ELET data collection and monitoring, and in developing measures to empower VET in combating and counteracting ELET.

### TAILORED RESPONSES TO INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

Policies and measures to tackle early leaving from education and training are more likely to succeed if they acknowledge the different factors that can influence it and are tailored to the specific profiles of young people at risk of leaving education and training prematurely.







There is no single blueprint of an effective intervention to tackle ELET: the detail of successful interventions differs by target group and setting. The study analysed 44 successful measures to tackle early leaving through VET and derived from these lessons for policy design, implementation and evaluation.

With some profiles of young people at risk of early leaving, small changes can make a big difference in retaining them in education and training.

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 study identified six profiles of early leavers and learners at risk of early leaving. These profiles illustrate how different risk factors can interact and lead to early leaving.

Table 1. **Profiles of early leavers or learners at risk of ELET**

<p>Learners escaping the system</p> 	<p>They are not radically different from other students. Their education performance is average or below average and they have low future education aspirations. Education is not major interest: they need motivation and encouragement to raise their aspirations.</p>
<p>Learners confronting the system</p> 	<p>Still in education and training but with high levels of absenteeism, low interest in education and training and gaps in basic skills, which is an obstacle for further progression. They need a combination of motivational activities and remedial training.</p>
<p>Learners disengaging due to difficulties adapting after transition</p> 	<p>They are starting to disengage during the transition period from one track to another. They have difficulties adapting to new work rhythms; they have inaccurate programme expectations and do not mix well with the group. They need support to engage fully in the programme.</p>
<p>Learners disengaging because they cannot find a placement of their choice</p> 	<p>Typically this can happen due to lack of placements in apprenticeship or a particular VET programme, lack of information and guidance or a combination of unrealistic expectations and lack of work-readiness. They need to be reoriented towards a more suitable track, possibly a bridging programme.</p>
<p>Learners who had to leave education and training because of caring, parenting or working obligations</p> 	<p>They are not interested in education but need a source of income or have other duties. Even if they see the relevance of education and training, external circumstances make it hard for them to enrol (e.g. lack of childcare). They need solutions that enable combining working and learning, possibly with support from social services.</p>
<p>Learners combining multiple disadvantage, possibly facing health and psycho-social issues</p> 	<p>They ended up leaving education and training for various reasons. They need complex support of which education and training is only a part.</p>

Source: Cedefop.

The profiles show different levels of disengagement and different types of challenge. Professionals who design measures to tackle early leaving 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.

## EARLY LEAVING PREVENTION

Preventing early leaving does not necessarily require extensive and costly measures or creation of new structures and programmes; relatively simple



adjustments by VET providers can make a big difference for those who are not yet significantly disengaged. This can have positive impact with young people who still attend education and training but are showing signs of disengagement or are facing challenges.

Around a third of policies analysed and with evidence of success used relatively simple and 'light-touch' activities in the context of existing education and training systems and institutions. Such actions could also be seen as core features of good quality education and training in general, as they are not specific to preventing early leaving.

Table 2 shows issues that can be tackled by education and training providers, solutions identified, and examples of measures to put some of these solutions in place.

## **INTERVENTION AND COMPENSATION**

Strongly disengaged young people need additional support to tackle other challenges in their lives and increase their interest in education and training.

Intervention measures seek to address risk factors that could have a negative impact on young people's motivation and desire to complete their studies and are typically provider responses. Sometimes the difference between prevention and intervention is marginal. Compensation measures seek to integrate early leavers back into education and training.

Compared to prevention, compensation measures are more complex to design and implement. The target group is more heavily disengaged and the gaps to compensate are wider. Putting early leavers into programmes that have the same features as those from which they dropped out is unlikely to lead to much success: they need a change of environment and pedagogical approach as well as a different educational project.

Table 2. Examples of effective prevention measures

Early leaving issues	Solutions	Examples of measures analysed
<p>Not keeping pace with the training programme. Some key learning outcomes have not been achieved preventing progression. As failure accumulates, s/he becomes increasingly disengaged. The bigger the gap, the harder it becomes to catch-up.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organise remedial support early, before the gap becomes too wide.</li> <li>Motivate and engage through discussions, demonstrations, and showing interest in his/her development.</li> <li>Organise the education and training programme to support success by adjusting working rhythms during the day, working on the classroom climate, reviewing the role and frequency of assessment.</li> </ul>	<p>BE-fr • <i>Expairs</i> (school-level innovation) • Certification by unit (system reform) • Vocational training accompanying measures (abH) • <i>Carpo</i></p> <p>DE • Pre-training EQ • Programme of qualified supervision in vocational schools and companies (QuABB)</p> <p>FR AFEV volunteer support</p> <p>LU Guidance and professional initiation courses</p> <p>NL Drive to reduce dropout</p>
<p>Lack of a positive project for the future They do not see learning as important, resulting in disinterest and disengagement.</p>	<p>Work with the young person to develop future goals, integrating education and training. Many measures include elements of coaching, mentoring and guidance. Key aspects are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>young person drives the process, not the counsellor;</li> <li>it is the goal-setting and positive reflection on the future that are key, not programme choice;</li> <li>the goals need to be motivating and realistic at the same time.</li> </ul>	<p>AT • apprenticeship coaching • youth coaching</p> <p>DE • <i>Carpo</i> • vocational orientation programme (BOP)</p> <p>DK Youth guidance centres</p> <p>EE Pathfinder centres</p> <p>FR AFEV volunteer support</p> <p>LU <i>Local action for youth</i></p> <p>HU <i>Springboard</i></p> <p>LU Second chance school</p> <p>NL <i>Drive to reduce dropout</i></p> <p>PL Voluntary labour corps</p>
<p>Negative perception of the education programme as second or third choice. Negative self-perception and self-efficacy. This hinders learning and triggers resistance and disengagement.</p>	<p>Valorise the training programme by making it more interesting and relevant. Use engaging teaching methods and pedagogies. Link theory to practice in the training programme. School-level activities to raise awareness among teachers.</p>	<p>BE-fr <i>Expairs</i> (school-level innovation)</p> <p>DK Youth guidance centres</p> <p>EE Pathfinder centres</p> <p>LU <i>Local action for youth</i></p> <p>NL <i>Drive to reduce dropout</i></p> <p>NL <i>Getting started</i></p> <p>PL Voluntary labour corps</p> <p>DK <i>Retention caravan</i></p>

Early leaving issues	Solutions	Examples of measures analysed
		FR New chance school HU Integrated pedagogical system
The student is excluded by the education and training institutions, removing a problem from the institution. This fosters disengagement and marginalisation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provider-level action plans.</li> <li>• Designate a person to combat early leaving with the support of leadership and the whole institution.</li> <li>• Raise awareness among teaching teams; together develop activities to reengage those at risk of early leaving. Put in place early warning measures that identify the persons at risk.</li> </ul>	FR <i>Foquale</i> and PSAD BE-fr • <i>Expairs</i> • Certification by unit DK <i>Retention caravan</i>
Young people with learning difficulties, at greater risk of falling behind and eventually dropping out.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early diagnosis and support to develop strategies to cope with one's difficulties.</li> <li>• Individualised programmes and assessments to cater for special learning needs.</li> </ul>	HU <i>Springboard</i> Integrated pedagogical system NL <i>Medical advice for sick-reported students (MASS)</i>
Parents are not sufficiently involved in children's education, do not feel at ease discussing education issues at home, so this is seen as not important by the young person.	Engage parents, organise dialogue with them. Make them aware of their child's education choices. Get them involved in supporting and motivating their children.	DK <i>Retention caravan</i> DE Vocational orientation programme (BOP) AT Youth coaching LU Guidance and professional initiation courses NL <i>Drive to reduce dropout</i>

Source: Cedefop.

It is important for compensation measures to provide the support that is right for the person. Flexibility is a key feature, with options including:

- (a) pooling resources from local support measures (psycho-social assistance, social services, health services);
- (b) transit to programmes that give access to mainstream qualifications, if the second chance programme itself is a bridging programme.

Table 3 details issues tackled by intervention and compensation measures, solutions identified, and examples of measures which have put some of these solutions in place.

## COMBINING MEASURES

A combination of VET with social and employment measures helps tailor responses to the different profiles of young people at risk of early leaving.

Measures to address early leaving can share features with other social services: psycho-social assistance, public employment services, and employment measures. Early leaving is not a new phenomenon and many countries and regions have had different responses for some time. One of the challenges is the multiplicity and the disconnected character of these measures. Support services to address early leaving have to be interconnected and also connect with other services to be effective for:

- (a) identification and referral of young people. Many measures rely on other services to refer young people: public employment services, education and training providers, NGOs and the justice system;
- (b) matching young people with appropriate services. Young people cannot be expected to navigate opportunities on their own and identify those that best suit them. Intermediary organisations are needed;
- (c) efficient use of resources. Support can be shared across different measures and services, as with medical support, psycho-social counselling and therapy to help with learning difficulties, and guidance or similar services to help find a job.

Countries are at different stages in coordinating ELET measures nationally and regionally and make sure they complement each other and link well with other social and employment services.

Table 3. Examples of effective intervention and compensation measures

Early leaving issues	Solutions	Examples of measures analysed
<p>Early leavers do not wish to enrol in programmes which remind them of negative experience. Also, being in a classroom with students who do not share their difficulties is discouraging.</p>	<p>Compensation measures offer alternative programmes and institutions: different environment and pedagogical approach.</p>	<p>EE KUTSE programme  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EPIDE insertion service</li> </ul> <p>FR  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New chance school</li> <li>• <i>Innovation pole</i></li> <li>• Second chance schools</li> </ul> <p>HU <i>Springboard</i>  IE <i>Youthreach</i>  LU Second chance school  PT Second chance school</p> </p></p>
<p>Gaps in basic skills (numeracy, literacy) which hamper further learning and professional integration.</p>	<p>Tailor-made basic skills training using pedagogies specific to the issues they are facing.</p>	<p>FR  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EPIDE insertion service</li> <li>• Second chance schools</li> </ul> <p>HU <i>Springboard</i>  IE <i>Youthreach</i></p> <p>LU Second chance school</p> </p>
<p>Personal issues (health, well-being, family, poverty) which hamper participation and success in education and training.</p>	<p>Case management to coordinate different forms of support, stabilisation of personal or other difficulties.</p>	<p>AT  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apprenticeship coaching</li> <li>• Production school</li> <li>• Youth coaching</li> <li>• <i>Carpo</i></li> </ul> <p>DE  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme of qualified supervision in vocational schools and companies (QuABB)</li> </ul> <p>FR  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EPIDE insertion service</li> <li>• <i>Drive to reduce dropout</i></li> <li>• <i>Getting started</i></li> </ul> <p>NL  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voluntary labour corps</li> </ul> <p>PL  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Second chance school</li> </ul> </p></p></p></p></p>
<p>Learning difficulties (dyslexia, dyscalculia) which make it hard for them to follow a standard track at upper secondary level.</p>	<p>Psycho-pedagogical support to help them tackle learning difficulties. Adjust the training programme to the target group, provide additional tuition, provide support such as speech-therapy, psychological</p>	<p>DE Vocational training accompanying measures ('abH')  AT Production school  EE Pathfinder centres  FR EPIDE insertion service</p>

Early leaving issues	Solutions	Examples of measures analysed
	counselling.	HU <i>Springboard</i> IE <i>Youthreach</i> NL • <i>Drive to reduce dropout</i> • <i>Getting started</i> PL Voluntary labour corps
Negative self-perception and self-efficacy hindering effective engagement in a learning process.	Motivational activities (including sport, artistic activities, games), building confidence and understanding oneself.	DE <i>Carpo</i> • AFEV volunteer support • EPIDE insertion service • <i>Innovation pole</i> • Second chance schools HU <i>Springboard</i> IE <i>Youthreach</i> NL <i>Getting started</i>

Source: Cedefop.

## EVALUATING IMPACT

Systematic evaluation of VET-related measures to tackle ELET is indispensable to upscaling and mainstreaming while ensuring sustainability. Such evaluations are far from being systematic in Europe.

Of the 337 policies and initiatives mapped in the study, only 44 were supported by evidence of success. Few evaluations analyse the real impact on individual learning pathways; even fewer analyse how and why a given intervention or policy influenced education outcomes.

Several were based solely on output data, such as the number of beneficiaries. Such data provide information on the scale of the activity but not on success in addressing the initial problem.

Just over half of the evaluations looked at results: what happened to the young people exiting the intervention and their subsequent relationship to education and training. A much smaller number followed them and was able to make conclusions about whether they eventually qualified. There is no systematic information on whether a given intervention leads to the achievement of an upper secondary qualification.

Since policies aim to address risk factors, reducing opportunities for the individual to leave education and training, success can also be measured by intermediary outcomes:

- (a) improved educational aspirations;
- (b) improved professional orientation;
- (c) improved education results or skills and competences;
- (d) improved work-readiness (behaviours, attitudes and social skills);
- (e) changed risk behaviours such as absenteeism;
- (f) improved motivation and confidence.

Measurement of such outcomes and analysis of how and why a given activity leads to the observed outcomes, was rare, with key weaknesses apparent in most of the evaluations analysed:

- (a) few used a design enabling robust statements about the contribution of the policy to the change observed. Quasi-experimental designs may not suit all types of intervention but they can be used more broadly;
- (b) few looked at policy impact on gender, minority background, or socioeconomic disadvantage. Participation data may reflect gender and other characteristics without respective differences in benefits being analysed;

(c) none looked at the impact at local or regional level. Comparisons with baseline situations were rare.

Fewer than half the measures analysed were first piloted or used an example originating elsewhere. Trial and transfer of successful international examples also appeared rare.

The study found that important improvements could be made to the scale and focus of evaluations of measures to tackle early leaving; such evaluations should be encouraged in EU policies and guidelines.

### **POLICY COMMITMENT AT ALL LEVELS**

Transferring successful projects and initiatives into national policies and measures will improve early leavers' perspectives and retain learners at risk of dropping out.

A high level of commitment by policy-makers is crucial to ensuring sustainability of good practices. All successful examples analysed demonstrate quick pick-up on innovation, effective implementation and evaluation of pilot projects, subsequent upscaling of the measure, and continued financial and political support.

Having evidence of success is essential to informing policies, putting in place funding arrangements, and helping build necessary capacity. Supporting peer learning and exchange of good practices also helps understanding of what works. Cedefop has identified successful measures with comprehensive monitoring and documentation of activities.

National policy-makers have been giving increasing opportunity to education and training providers and other local stakeholders to develop their own approaches, using supplied guidelines, methods and advice. Better cooperation between national, regional and local authorities may ensure that best practices are captured and mainstreamed to make them available nationally.

### **POLICY COMMITMENT TO VET**

There is a need for strengthened policy commitment at EU and national levels to boost the role of VET in tackling ELET.

VET should have a clear place in EU and national programmes on early leaving, which seems to be more acute in VET than in general education. To reduce ELVET, there is a need for prevention efforts to increase the quality, accessibility and attractiveness of VET.



It is also important to acknowledge VET as part of the solution to ELET. The study shows that VET's more practical approach, particularly when work-based, can make learning more meaningful for some young people and play a role in motivating them to continue in, or return to, education and training.

The study examined national strategies for roles given to VET within policies to tackle ELET but found that such strategies rarely have a clear focus on VET. More attention should be paid to using vocational pedagogies in national strategies to tackle early leaving.

This potential role for VET should also be recognised in EU reference documents, policies and programmes. Action to date has focused on guidance on how to address early school leaving. A next step could be to develop guidance on how to monitor and evaluate measures to address ELET. This is particularly relevant in the context of the European Structural Fund (ESF) criteria and other EU funding mechanisms, which emphasise the need for evidence-based policies and monitoring and evaluating policy delivery of expected results.

## CHAPTER 1.

# Introduction

Early leaving from education and training (ELET) is linked to unemployment, social exclusion, and poverty. There are many reasons why some young people give up vocational education and training (VET) prematurely: personal or family problems, learning difficulties, or a fragile socioeconomic situation. The way the VET system is set up and the environment in individual VET institutions are also important factors.

Since there is no single reason for early leaving, there are no easy answers. Policies to reduce early leaving from VET (ELVET) must address a range of triggers and combine education and social policy, youth work and health-related aspects such as drug use or mental and emotional problems.

Cedefop carried out the present study focusing on the contribution that VET can make to reducing ELET. The first volume of the study examined quantitative data to understand better the size of early leaving from VET and the factors leading to it (Cedefop, 2016). Volume II looks into the potential of VET policies to reduce early leaving from education, focusing on the following main issues:

- (a) understanding the role of VET within the policy arena addressing ELET;
- (b) analysing the features of VET measures that are effective at tackling ELET;
- (c) examining the conditions needed for evaluating and mainstreaming successfully VET policies and measures.

Conclusions aim to assist national policy-makers and decision-makers at different levels in improving VET policies to tackle ELET. By identifying good practices and existing gaps in policy impact evaluation, the study aims to support policy-makers and evaluators in their decisions on:

- (a) what indicators should be monitored and against which indicators a measure/policy should be evaluated;
- (b) which approaches and methods to choose in drawing conclusions from the change and how this is related to the measure or policy implementation;
- (c) how to make judgements about programme performance.

The study identifies indicators that can be useful to evaluate the impact of policies or programmes to tackle early leaving and provides examples of robust evaluations in this field.

Based on the findings presented in this paper, plus additional sources and evidence, Cedefop is developing an electronic toolkit for professionals designing

and implementing measures to tackle ELET to be available in 2017. The toolkit aims to provide guidance on:

- (a) how to identify early leavers and those at risk of early leaving;
- (b) how to intervene to keep them in or bring them back to the system, with a focus on VET approaches and methodologies;
- (c) how to evaluate the measures implemented.

The toolkit will be populated by examples of good practice and tools.

The following subsections provide the main elements of the national and EU context for VET in addressing early leaving, and reflect on existing gaps in understanding what works and why.

### 1.1. VET in national and EU early leaving policy

The definition of early leaving from education and training (ELET) used at EU level refers to ‘those young people who leave education and training with only lower secondary education or less, and who are no longer in education and training’ (European Commission, 2013a, p. 8). European statistics measure early leaving rates as the percentage of 18 to 24 year-olds with only lower secondary education or less and no longer in education or training <sup>(4)</sup>.

Numerous policy documents at European level have identified the challenges of labour market integration and social inclusion for disadvantage groups including early leavers considered to be at risk of poverty or social exclusion. The Europe 2020 headline target reducing ELET to less than 10% has kept this issue high on national policy agendas and has contributed to promoting VET reforms (European Commission, 2015a).

Today, Member States seem to be on the right track, as ELET has been declining over recent years <sup>(5)</sup> but huge discrepancies remain between and within Member States. In 2014, an average of 11.1% of young people (aged 18 to 24) in

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<sup>(4)</sup> Early leavers from education and training are defined as persons aged 18 to 24 fulfilling the following two conditions:

- (a) the highest level of education or training attained is ISCED 0, 1, 2 or 3c short;
- (b) no education or training has been received in the four weeks preceding the survey. The reference group to calculate the early leaving rate consists of the total population of the same age group (18 to 24). All measurements come from the EU labour force survey (LFS).

<sup>(5)</sup> Eurostat. Europe 2020 indicators – education: [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Europe\\_2020\\_indicators\\_-\\_education#Early\\_leaving\\_from\\_education\\_and\\_training\\_is\\_declining](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Europe_2020_indicators_-_education#Early_leaving_from_education_and_training_is_declining)

the EU-28 did not qualify in upper secondary education: in Spain, Malta and Portugal more than 20% of those in education and training left prematurely with Slovenia and Croatia at the other extreme at less than 5% (European Commission, 2015c).

The *Council recommendation of 28 June 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving* notes that ‘vocational schools face a particular responsibility and challenge with respect to the reduction of early school leaving’ (Council of the EU, 2011, p. 4). In line with this, and focusing specifically on VET, the *Bruges communiqué* invites EU Member States to ‘maximise the contribution of VET to reducing the percentage of early leavers from education to below 10% through a combination of both preventive and remedial measures’ (Council of the EU and European Commission, 2010, p. 15).

In the Riga conclusions of 2015, the ministers for VET propose, as one of the new medium-term deliverables for the period 2015-20, to ‘enhance access to VET and qualifications for all through more flexible and permeable systems, notably by offering efficient and integrated guidance services and making available validation of non-formal and informal learning’ (Latvian Presidency of the Council of the EU, 2015, p. 4). Among the possible concrete actions suggested, the conclusions refer to ‘integrating guidance and counselling services provided by both education and employment sectors for both I-VET and C-VET, [and] promot[ing] measures to foster inclusiveness of VET systems (including preventing early leaving or second chance-VET programmes leading to qualifications)’ (Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, 2015, pp. 8-9).

The same year, the Council adopted *Conclusions on reducing early school leaving and promoting success in school* recalling the importance of maintaining a focus on inclusive education and reducing early leaving (Council of the EU, 2015).

The potential of VET in preventing early leaving or as remedial measure is also recognised in the European youth employment initiative <sup>(6)</sup> (preceded by the European youth opportunities initiative <sup>(7)</sup>), proposed by the European Council and backed by a budgetary envelope of EUR 6 billion for the period 2014-20. A

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<sup>(6)</sup> European Commission, Directorate-General Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion: *News: Commission proposes rules to make Youth employment initiative a reality*, 12 March 2013.

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=1829>

<sup>(7)</sup> European Commission, Directorate-General Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion: *Youth opportunities initiative*.

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1006>

key measure of this initiative is encouragement for Member States to set up youth guarantee schemes. The principle of such schemes is that all young people outside education, training or employment should be actively supported by Member State authorities to start a new training programme (including apprenticeships), traineeship or job (Council of the EU, 2013). Youth guarantees should embrace vocational training measures, particularly traineeships or apprenticeships. Early leavers, or those at risk of early leaving, should be a key target group for these interventions. Young people who dropped out prematurely should be offered training opportunities leading to a qualification corresponding to labour market demand.

In line with previous initiatives, the role of VET has assumed greater importance in reducing early leaving in recent years throughout Europe. governments, as shown in more detail later in Chapters 3, 4 and 5, have actively sought to prevent pupils leaving education without an upper secondary qualification by launching a variety of prevention, intervention and compensation measures, often involving VET.

According to the latest country-specific analysis, most Member States implemented the 2011 Council recommendation (Council of the EU, 2011) either through adopting explicit comprehensive strategies (Belgium-fr, Bulgaria, France, Hungary, Malta, the Netherlands, Austria, Romania) or other national policies (Cyprus, Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Spain, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, Finland, Sweden, the UK). Other countries have only partly or not yet (as of 2014) implemented comprehensive strategies or national policies (European Commission, 2015b).

The recent joint publication of Eurydice and Cedefop (2014) examined national strategies for whether and what role is given to VET within the policies to tackle ELET. While there is a significant number of measures indicating that VET is playing a role in this across Europe, this role is a more integral element of some strategies than others. Good examples of comprehensive strategies that cover the whole education and training sector, including both general education and VET, can be found in Belgium-fl, the Netherlands and Austria, (Box 1).

**Box 1. Comprehensive ELET strategies covering VET: examples from Belgium-fl, the Netherlands and Austria**

The Flemish action plan on ELET includes 19 specific actions. While most of the measures are general education specific, priority VET-related activity involves developing vocational courses (that lead to a formal qualification) as high quality second chance options for early school leavers (Flemish Ministry of Education and Training, 2013).

The Dutch strategy for addressing early leaving considers the unique features of the problem within VET. The strategy foresees different targets for general secondary and secondary vocational education providers, since early leaving is higher in the latter. VET-specific measures are also promoted to address relevant early leaving weak points in a more targeted manner; overall, VET providers are given the freedom to design responses most relevant to their specific situation (Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2014).

The Austrian national strategy to combat early school leaving from 2012, also addresses both academic and vocational education, especially given the importance of apprenticeships in national education and training. The apprenticeship-coaching initiative aims to support apprentices during their training and boost completion rates (BMUKK, 2012).

*Source:* Cedefop desk research and interviews.

Denmark and Estonia also address ELVET in national strategies and have established targets for completion and ELVET rates.

**Box 2. Setting national targets: examples from Denmark and Estonia**

The Danish reform agreement improving vocational education and training, concluded in February 2014 and applied since August 2015, establishes the objective that the VET completion rate must be improved from 52% in 2012 to at least 60% by 2020 and at least 67% by 2025 (Danish Ministry of Education, 2014).

In Estonia, the lifelong learning strategy's vocational education and training programme 2015-18 aims at reducing the share of early leavers from VET among young adults (18 to 24) so that it is less than 20% by the year 2020 (Estonian Ministry of Education and Research, 2015).

*Source:* Cedefop desk research and interviews.

Despite these developments, the 2015 *Council conclusions on reducing early school leaving and promoting success in school* point out that the comprehensive strategies advocated in the 2011 Council recommendation are still missing in many countries (Council of the EU, 2011; 2015). However, many other measures have been implemented across European countries to tackle

ELVET, even if not necessarily mentioned in national strategies. Cedefop analyses the introduction of such measures in its monitoring report on VET policies 2010-14, while in its current analysis, the research team identified 337 measures to tackle ELET that have VET in their component (Cedefop, 2015a). Several countries are undertaking overarching VET reforms, aiming at expanding the offer or improving its quality and attractiveness, which can ultimately have an impact on attracting young people back to VET or preventing young learners leaving.

## 1.2. VET as a remedy to early leaving

Data analysed in Volume I provide quantitative evidence of the preventive and remedial role of VET in addressing and counteracting early leaving. VET systems accommodate large numbers of returning learners, who have either dropped out completely or are at risk of early leaving and have decided to change their studies from one course, provider or type of learning, to another. Evidence shows that many early leavers from both general and vocational education, if they return to learning, choose VET. Most of these remain and qualify in VET. This is facilitated by measures adopted in Member States, such as, the newly established vocational courses in Portugal targeting young adults who are at risk of early leaving or have left their studies early (Box 3). The challenge is ensuring that the programmes they join are sufficiently adapted to the needs of returning learners (so that they do not drop out again) and that the programmes lead to formal qualifications or provide a preparatory path onto mainstream tracks.

### Box 3. Accommodating learners at risk of ELET: Portuguese example

The vocational courses in Portugal, mainstreamed after a pilot phase in 2012-14, target early leavers and students at risk of dropout in basic and upper secondary education. Basic vocational courses target students over 13 years old who do not meet the qualification criteria to access a professional course, young people who have a history of school failure, and early school leavers who show an interest in VET. Vocational courses in basic education lead to an academic certification (\*), but aim at providing the student with a first contact with vocational pedagogies, including on-the-job learning in companies.

(\*) This certification can correspond to the second or third cycle of basic education. The second cycle comprises years 5 and 6 and corresponds to the last years of primary education; and the third cycle comprises years 7 to 9 and corresponds to lower secondary.

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

Examination of young people's pathways and other evidence analysed by Cedefop show that VET attracts learners at risk of dropping out or those who have already dropped out because they prefer VET specific pedagogies as a way of learning. VET pedagogies, such as work-based learning and other kinetic and labour-market-focused pedagogies, have a central role in policies addressing early leaving (see also Cedefop, 2015b; Psifidou, 2016a). For example, an overwhelming majority of second chance measures use pedagogies originating from VET, such as in-company learning, company visits, and practical learning in workshops. Many practitioners interviewed for this study repeatedly highlighted the appreciation of young people to be able to undertake practical work in second chance programmes from day one rather than having to spend days, weeks, months or years studying theory before being able to put into practice their desire to do something hands-on

**Box 4. Second chance measures: examples from France and Italy**

The French new chance secondary school in the region of Lyon has been integrating former early leavers in a VET pathway since 2002. Candidates have to undergo interview coupled with tests in French, mathematics and general culture. Around 200 students apply each year and about 100 are accepted. Successful students are integrated in VET or apprenticeship tracks where they spend three days at school and two days at an enterprise. There is no obligation for students to arrive at school with an apprenticeship contract, which is often a major factor of early leaving; instead, the school helps them find one. A tutor is assigned for each student and monitors their apprenticeship at the enterprise.

ENGIM, an Italian NGO working on professional training and orientation, undertakes a lot of work with young people who have dropped out of school because they were not motivated by traditional classroom-based teaching methods. Instead, they are attracted to practical components of professional training. This aspect is prioritised in the second chance learning opportunities of the organisation which seek to make every class relevant to the field studied and to the future profession, even in more academic subjects. As little time as possible is spent in a classroom; the rest is spent in 'laboratories' where students are involved in practical activities, and where they have the opportunity to do something for the community (such as improving public gardens). Such professional training is considered an important factor by interviewees since students particularly like this experience of getting out of the classroom and be in touch with the world of work.

*Source:* Cedefop desk research and interviews.

VET pedagogies tend to be a central characteristic of shorter-term time-out measures, which provide students facing personal or academic difficulties a respite from their studies outside a typical classroom setting (Psifidou, 2016b). There are ample national and local examples of time-out measures which rely on



VET pedagogies in Europe, as in the local authority run factory schools in Hamburg which promote personal and social development and practical learning in workshops and companies. Students at risk of dropping out can enter a factory school for three months, even if many choose to stay longer as these schools meet their interests and capabilities better than their home school.

**Box 5. Using VET pedagogies in short time-out measures: German example**

Factory schools (currently eight schools with up to 400 students) are an integral part of the regular transfer system in Hamburg (Germany) since 2011. Most students in this programme have not achieved a lower secondary education certificate or left school with limited training maturity (including basic school knowledge and personal and social skills needed to progress in education and training). These schools are characterised by individualised approach, focusing on learner potential instead of weaknesses, for example missing skills, and on practical activities to encourage learning.

The factory schools offer school-based learning elements and the simulated production process of a training company, focusing on practical work and support for personal development. Young people learn how to be responsible in production processes and get the chance to develop competences and skills and increase their self-esteem through direct contact with and feedback from customers in the school cafeteria.

*Source:* Cedefop desk research and interviews.

Remunerated apprenticeships within VET programmes help to retain learners who may have otherwise left education early to find work. An opportunity to work for an employer, earn a salary and gain a qualification while gaining valuable workplace skills and experience are important pull factors for young people who prefer a swift transition from education to 'earning' and for returning learners who do not want or cannot afford to lose income though they still want to pursue formal learning.

The competence-based approach promoted in VET also supports (re)integration of learners into VET. The emphasis on what learners can do as a result of training (learning outcomes) is particularly important for those with work experience who want to return to VET. Many reforms introduced by the Member States have sought to give students an opportunity to undertake work and performance-based learning that can be accumulated to a vocational qualification, allowing students to study at their own speed independent from strict course structures. These reforms include breaking down programmes into units or modules and offering opportunities for recognition of prior learning.

## CHAPTER 2.

# Research scope and methodology

This research paper explores the role of vocational education and training (VET) policies in addressing early leaving from education and training (ELET), utilising various qualitative sources based on both literature review and field work.

The main research questions were:

- (a) how VET may prevent and counteract ELET;
- (b) what are the key features of effective VET measures to tackle early leaving;
- (c) what are the conditions for evaluating and successfully mainstreaming VET policies and measures?

The research combined a mapping and selection of VET-related measures addressing early leaving through desk research at country and measure level, as well as study visits and 428 interviews with policy-makers (national and regional/local authorities in education), practitioners (principals, teachers, trainers, guidance personnel, persons from second change measures, employers), researchers and learners. Interviewees were identified via desk-research and snow-ball sampling; 117 interviews were conducted at national level and 311 interviews at measure level.

On-site interviews during the field work were to explore in greater depth the measures put in place to tackle early leaving, and the ways in which data are used to inform these practices. 'Sites' (a site corresponds to a local area such as a town, or a part of a city), were identified according to the following criteria:

- (a) medium- to high-level challenges with early leaving;
- (b) participation in measures/initiatives to tackle early leaving;
- (c) diversity of urban and rural sites.

VET schools and apprenticeship centres visited covered a wide range of economic sectors as well as areas with a high concentration of disadvantaged population. This was particularly true for countries such as Belgium-fr, Denmark, Croatia, Italy and Portugal. Each site visited offered VET courses in different sectors, with a strong presence of the catering/food/hospitality sector in the sample.

The research team initially mapped 337 measures across Europe. These included not only measures applied in VET schools or apprenticeship providers, but also those used in different contexts, including general education, which use a VET-related methodology (job discovery initiatives, visits to companies, in-

company learning) or second chance schools (such as practical learning in workshops).

More in-depth analysis was conducted of 44 measures with evidence of effectiveness across 15 countries: Austria (four measures); Belgium-fr (two); Denmark (two); Estonia (two); France (six); Germany (seven); Hungary (two); Ireland (three); Italy (two); Luxembourg (three); the Netherlands (three); Norway (one); Poland (one); Portugal (two) and the UK (four). The selection was driven by the quality of existing evaluative evidence and the need to examine a range of different types of measure (prevention, intervention and compensation <sup>(8)</sup>).

The results of the analyses are presented as follows. Chapter 3 presents the characteristics and types of VET policy which address ELET; their success features are discussed in Chapter 4; and the evaluation of their effectiveness in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 presents the main conclusions and policy messages.

Two workshops were organised to validate preliminary findings from the desk research and fieldwork. The first focused on the role of VET in reducing early leaving from VET <sup>(9)</sup> and the second on evaluating impact and success for VET policies to tackle ELET <sup>(10)</sup>. The conclusions of the workshops fed into the analysis.

A short [video of recorded interviews](#) giving learners' testimonies was also prepared <sup>(11)</sup>, showcasing four stories in two European countries. They highlight the experience of learners in terms of the human story and testimonials of those for whom VET has played a role in their decision to continue their studies. These

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<sup>(8)</sup> Preventive measures refer to system level responses – as opposed to provider level responses (intervention measures) – which seek to address risk factors that could have a negative impact on young people's motivation and desire to complete their studies. Intervention measures support young people within the school context and address all pupils, but are especially beneficial to those at risk of dropping out. Compensation measures seek to integrate early school leavers back into education and training.

<sup>(9)</sup> Cedefop workshop: *The role of VET in reducing early leaving from education and training*; 3 and 4 June 2014, Thessaloniki.  
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/events/ELET2014/>

<sup>(10)</sup> Cedefop workshop: *Evaluating impact and success for VET policies to tackle early leaving from education and training*; 21 October 2015, Brussels.  
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/events/evaluating-impact-and-success-vet-policies-tackle-early-leaving-education>

<sup>(11)</sup> Cedefop: *the role of VET in combatting early leaving*.  
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/videos/role-vet-combatting-early-leaving>; <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/videos/role-vet-combatting-early-leaving>.

first-hand testimonials of the experience of learners serve as the human face of the impact that policy can have on the lives of young people.

The study methodology is described in detail in a separate annex available on request <sup>(12)</sup>.

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<sup>(12)</sup> If you are interested, please contact the project manager, Irene Psifidou, at: [rena.psifidou@cedefop.europa.eu](mailto:rena.psifidou@cedefop.europa.eu)

## CHAPTER 3.

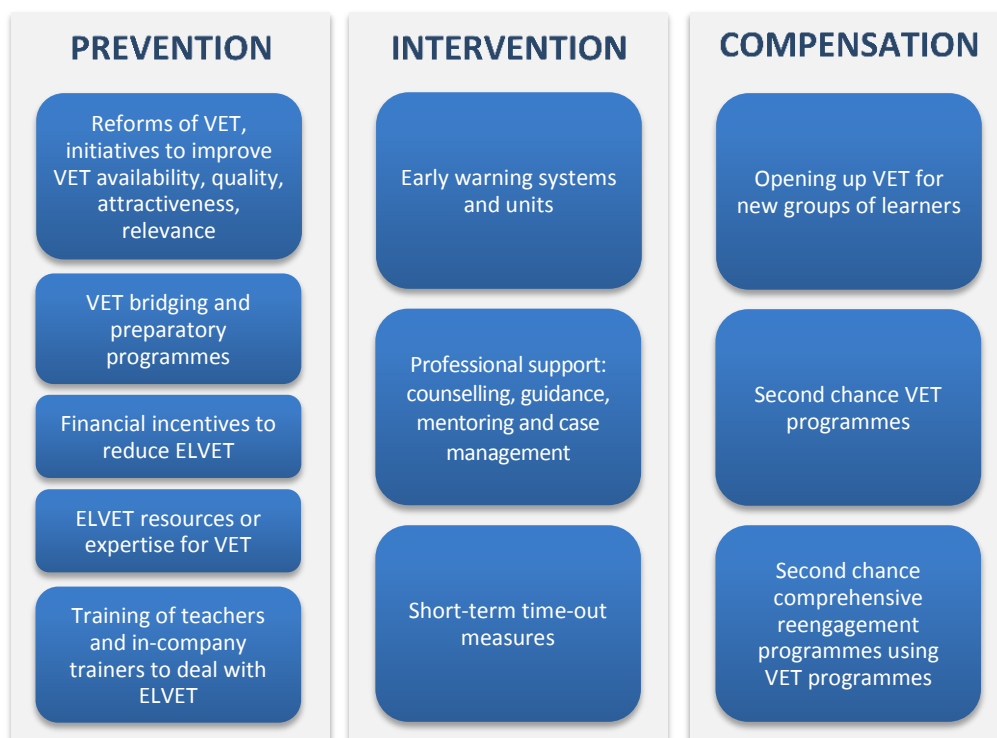
# VET policies to address early leaving

This chapter illustrates the many different approaches countries have adopted to address early leaving from vocational education and training (ELVET). The typology is based on VET-specific measures and those that rely on traditional VET pedagogies as a means of reducing early leaving. The measures selected concern lower and upper secondary level VET; the review excludes policies/measures introduced to tackle early leaving from higher VET and continuing VET (CVET), though some of the second chance measures discussed may operate on the borderline between initial VET (IVET) and CVET.

A total of 11 groups of measures have been identified according to the timing of the intervention during the journey of a typical VET student or a dropout:

- (a) preventive measures are typically system level responses – as opposed to provider level responses (intervention measures) – which seek to address risk factors that could have a negative impact on young people’s motivation and desire to complete their studies. Sometimes the difference between ‘prevention’ and ‘intervention’ measures is marginal and some measures could potentially be grouped in either of the categories;
- (b) intervention measures tend to support young people during their VET studies and address all pupils in general, but are especially beneficial to those at risk of dropping out;
- (c) compensation measures are those that seek to integrate early leavers back into education and training.

Figure 1. **Typology of measures to address early leaving from VET**



Source: Cedefop.

The 11 categories of measure are discussed briefly below, outlining their main purpose, target groups, approaches and practical examples.

### 3.1. Preventive measures

Preventive measures take many different forms; five types are examined in this section.

The first type includes structural VET reforms and initiatives aiming to improve the availability, quality, attractiveness or relevance of VET. These measures affect VET as a whole and go beyond the issue of early leaving. They include, for instance, modularisation and partial certification in VET programmes, measures to improve the alignment of VET programmes with the skills required in the labour market, or the introduction of new VET or apprenticeship schemes. Table 5 lists relevant initiatives, and Box 6 presents some examples.

Table 5. **Improving the availability, quality, attractiveness or relevance of VET**

Country	Measures
	<b>Measures analysed in depth</b>
BE-fr	Certification per unit (CPU)
IE	Learning certificate applied (LCA)
PT	Vocational Courses
UK	'Success through skills strategy' – Apprenticeships Northern Ireland (increasing the number and quality of apprenticeships)
	<b>Other examples</b>
NL	Initiative 'Education that fits with the labour market'
NO	Social contract on more apprenticeships ( <i>Samfunnskontrakt for flere læreplasser</i> )
PL	Modular programmes in IVET

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

Box 6. **Improving VET's availability, quality, attractiveness or relevance: examples from Belgium-fr, the Netherlands and Poland**

The most recent preventive initiative in the French Community of Belgium is certification per unit (CPU). It was introduced in 2011 as a pilot in three VET sectors (auto mechanic, auto technician, beauty practitioner) and was generalised to all VET schools and adult education in September 2014 in these sectors. It provides flexibility to learners to complete their VET by gradually certifying their skills.

The Netherlands has introduced the initiative *Education that fits with the labour market* with the aim of reducing ELVET. It involves the continuous adaptation of VET to the changing labour market. Within this initiative, the law *Macro efficiency VET*, taking effect from August 2015, establishes that VET schools are required to provide objective information about the quality and labour market relevance of programmes to their potential students. This should enable new students to make an informed decision when choosing a programme.

Poland has recently introduced modular programmes in IVET, which allow for the creation of more flexible VET programmes, tailored to market expectations. The National Centre for Supporting Vocational and Continuing Education supports the implementation of these programmes. Up to 2012, a project aiming at the implementation of such programmes was conducted in 256 VET institutions with the involvement of approximately 300 experts. The project mainly aimed at the preparation of VET teachers and the local governing and supervisory bodies to deal with their implementation.

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

The other four types of preventive measure are introduced in Table 6, followed by examples.

Table 6. **Key features of preventive measures**

	<b>VET bridging and preparatory programmes, including career exploration opportunities and study guarantees</b>	<b>Financial incentives to reduce ELVET</b>	<b>ELVET expertise and resources for VET providers</b>	<b>Training of teachers and in-company trainers to deal with ELVET</b>
Goals	To facilitate more supported, prepared and informed transitions by helping unqualified young people to upskill and become better prepared for VET and to obtain and retain apprenticeships	To offer financial incentives as a way of encouraging: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VET providers to address ELVET,</li> <li>• employers to take on less attractive (in terms of skills and capabilities) students as apprentices and trainees</li> <li>• VET students to take up and complete VET studies</li> </ul>	To provide individual VET providers with additional resources or expertise to handle the problem.	To train teachers and in-company trainers to identify early signs of disengagement, to support at-risk students and to deal with dropout situations.
Intervention logic	Introduced in recognition of the fact that there are students who are not sufficiently qualified/skilled/prepared/motivated to enter VET (or the next stage of learning in general) and need additional time and support to explore study options, improve grades, gain work experience or gain new vocational, academic and life skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• for VET providers incentives can be a useful way to get them to 'prioritise' the issue of dropout</li> <li>• for employers, incentives can encourage them to consider applicants they would not have considered otherwise due to the additional time and support they may need</li> <li>• for at-risk VET students incentives may enable and motivate them to remain in learning instead of dropping out over financial concerns</li> </ul>	Introduced in recognition of the fact that not all VET providers have the expertise to address high levels of early leaving or they lack the drive to prioritise the topic	The quality and preparedness of VET teachers and in-company trainers to work with at-risk groups and identify and support those who are starting to show early signs of dropping out have an impact on ELVET.
Target groups	Young people in educational transition points. More specifically: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• those who are unsure of their study choice and those who lack motivation to enrol and consequently are at risk of disengagement</li> <li>• those who lack skills (academic, vocational or life) or grades to enter VET</li> <li>• those who have not managed to secure an apprenticeship</li> </ul>	Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, young people with learning difficulties, young people with complex needs	VET providers with high dropout rates, and young people at risk of dropping out	VET teachers and trainers, and young people at risk of dropping out
Activities	Various approaches aiming to give young people who are unsure of their study choice or have not been motivated to enrol on any course, an opportunity to spend time trying out different courses and	Financial incentives	Often either additional funding is provided or an external expert is invited to the school/institute to	Incorporating training on how to identify and support potential early leavers into initial or continuing teacher training



	<b>VET bridging and preparatory programmes, including career exploration opportunities and study guarantees</b>	<b>Financial incentives to reduce ELVET</b>	<b>ELVET expertise and resources for VET providers</b>	<b>Training of teachers and in-company trainers to deal with ELVET</b>
	<p>forms of VET and improve skills and study results, plus improve their motivation and chances to find a VET course/track that is right for them</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to give students who are not sufficiently qualified/skilled to enter the next stage an opportunity to catch up on learning, gain new skills, improve grades and gain work experience</li> <li>• to ensure that all young people who are looking for an apprenticeship contract (or another form of VET) but do not succeed in finding one are offered an alternative form of training in which they can be prepared for a contract</li> </ul>		<p>oversee or help develop and/or implement a comprehensive ELVET prevention strategy</p>	
Examples of planned outcomes	<p>For young people: improved understanding of study and course opportunities, improved motivation/skills to continue studies at the next level, improved preparedness in terms of vocational, academic, soft/life skills to obtain and retain a VET study place.</p> <p>Structural: reduced levels of disengagement at key transition point(s), higher participation in VET, especially participation of at-risk students, higher VET completion.</p>	<p>For young people: improved motivation to complete studies, improved ability to complete studies.</p> <p>Structural: higher participation in VET, higher VET completion.</p>	<p>For providers: improved ability to address ELVET.</p> <p>Structural: higher participation in VET, higher VET completion.</p>	<p>For teachers: improved ability to identify students who may be at risk of dropping out at an earlier stage of the disengagement 'process', improve ability to support young people showing signs of dropping out.</p> <p>Structural: higher VET completion.</p>
Prevalence	<p>Established practice in Member States, became more common in the past five to seven years: several countries have mainstreamed their pilot projects, others still piloting. Several countries introduced new measures as a result of the Youth guarantee and ELET/ELVET strategies</p>	<p>Few examples of financial incentives for VET providers, employers and learners across Member States: the developments linked to the VET funding policy (e.g. availability of performance-based funding policy, universal versus circumstantial student aid policy)</p>	<p>About a fifth of Member States have or have had time-bound project-based activities in this field</p>	<p>Few examples across the reviewed countries.</p>

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

VET bridging and preparatory programmes are distinctive approaches that Member States have adopted for more supported, prepared and informed transitions for young people who are vulnerable to disengagement. Several examples have been identified in this study (Table 7 and Boxes 7 and 8).

Table 7. **VET bridging and preparatory programmes**

Country	Measures
<b>Measures analysed in depth</b>	
AT	Supra-company training programme ( <i>Überbetriebliche Lehrausbildung, ÜBA</i> )
DE	Career/vocational orientation programme ( <i>Berufsorientierungsprogramme</i> )
HU	<i>Dobbantó</i> programme (special ninth grade preparatory class at VET schools)
LU	Guidance and professional initiation courses (COIP) and professional initiation courses to various occupations (IPDM)
NO	Certificate of practice
UK-Wales	Pathways to apprenticeship
<b>Other examples</b>	
BE-fr	Job trial initiative ( <i>essais métiers</i> )
DE	Pre-vocational training measures ( <i>Berufsvorbereitende Maßnahmen, BvB</i> )
DK	Introduction of a compulsory subject on 'educational, vocational and job market counselling' and an elective subject on 'crafts and design' to enhance student interest in VET
DK	Mentoring schemes of VET institutions (such as the Aalborg Technical College)
UK	English traineeship programme

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

Several countries offer VET study/career exploration programmes. These give young people who are interested in VET but have not been able to enrol on any course, an opportunity to spend time trying out different courses, visit companies and undertake work-based training in companies or in different workshops; they aim to improve their previous test results and so improve their chances of finding a right VET school or an employer to take them on as an apprentice.

These opportunities typically help young people to learn about occupations, understand what studies and work in different sectors are really like, and learn about their own interests as well as their strengths and weaknesses. The programmes can also include continuing and follow-up support from a case worker, for example until the end of the first year of vocational training, so that they have someone to turn to when they face difficulties. Participation in such

programmes typically results in a certificate and/or exemptions and participants are usually in a much stronger position to find a training place than before the programme.

**Box 7. VET bridging and preparatory programmes: examples from Belgium-fr, Germany, Denmark and France**

In the French Community of Belgium, the *essais métiers* initiative gives VET students an opportunity to undertake short-time 'discovery internships'. After registering in apprenticeship centres organised by enterprises, the early leavers test three jobs within two weeks in sectors with skills demand. This allows them to gain some initial job experience before choosing a definite pathway.

Career/vocational orientation programme (*Berufsorientierungsprogramme*) in Germany is aimed at students in general lower secondary education who are considering VET but are unsure of their career direction. The participants take part in an 80-hour work experience course. This involves a two-week placement in a training centre to train in three different occupational workshops to explore their interest and skills in different occupations.

As part of public school reform introduced in 2014, Denmark aims at strengthening pupils' education readiness and knowledge of the post-compulsory education system and labour market. It has introduced a compulsory subject on educational, vocational and job market counselling and the elective subject crafts and design, which should also increase student interest in VET. Many VET institutions in Denmark have set up mentoring schemes in cooperation with the local youth guidance centre (*Ungdommens Uddannelsesvejledning*) and compulsory schools to support the transition from lower secondary education to VET. At Aalborg Technical College, at-risk students are accompanied through the transition by their guidance counsellor from compulsory school who keeps contact with the student for the first four to five months in VET.

A VET school in Strasbourg (France) has an initiative focusing on the choice of pathway, which is the main factor for early leaving. It concerns students from lower secondary schools who want to enter an appropriate VET school for their choice of pathway. The VET school liaises with various lower secondary schools in the region and organises visits during which students meet pedagogical staff as well as guidance and psychological staff for an individual interview. They also attend practical workshops of their choice. At the end of the day, a debriefing takes place with pedagogical staff. At the beginning of the new school year, the VET school has a similar process of interviewing and practical workshops for newly arrived students who did not have a chance to benefit from such visit.

*Source:* Cedefop desk research and interviews.

Other countries give students who are not sufficiently qualified/skilled to enter the next stage an opportunity to catch up on learning, gain new skills, improve grades and gain work experience as part of VET preparatory/bridging programmes. They usually involve an on-the-job training period in a company, several companies or in a workshop, alongside some school-based learning.

**Box 8. Programmes focused on gaining new skills: examples from Germany, Luxembourg, Austria, Norway and the UK-England**

Germany has well-established pre-vocational training measures (*Berufsvorbereitende Maßnahmen*, BvB) which work as preparatory programmes for young people who are looking for an apprenticeship training contract with a training company but who do not succeed in finding one. The preparatory programmes are aimed at low-qualified youth, to help them prepare for a training contract. There are three different types of measure:

- the introductory training programme for young people, which consists of a placement/internship to gain practical training and work experience in a company as a way of getting access to a regular apprenticeship contract;
- the vocational preparation year, where students have a placement in a training company but also attend an additional year of school to improve their general (including German language) and work-related skills;
- vocational training in non-company establishments within the dual system, in programmes usually offered by a social agency and where the practical activities are developed in several company-placements.

In Luxembourg, guidance and professional initiation courses (COIP) and professional initiation courses to various occupations (IPDM) are available to pupils and early school leavers aged 15 to 18 years who lack the necessary skills to find a job and do not fulfil the requirements for entry into technical/vocational secondary education. The courses last one year and focus on acquisition of key competences corresponding to the lower secondary education level and the definition of an individual professional project. They include a practical and professional component covering a traineeship in a company and training units in a school workshop.

Supra-company apprenticeships were introduced for young people who could not find an apprenticeship place in Austria. The concept was strengthened in 2008 when a training place became a guarantee for every young person up to age 18. The practical part of supra-company apprenticeships is completed at a training institution, or in several different companies in short work placements, while the school-based part is provided at the regular part-time vocational schools. Supra company apprenticeships are generally preceded by a period of vocational guidance and coaching to ensure young people make informed career choice and select a realistic pathway for them. The ultimate goal is to transfer the young person to a regular apprenticeship.

The English traineeship programme was developed to help young people who are focused on getting an apprenticeship or sustainable job but who do not yet have the skills or experience to compete successfully for vacancies. There are three main components to traineeships, acknowledging that barriers to finding paid work (including apprenticeships) are often multifaceted:

- high quality work experience placement: developing workplace skills;
- a focused period of work preparation training: including CV writing, job search skills and interview preparation to help young people with the practicalities of finding and securing work;
- English and maths training: to ensure trainees have, or are working towards, the levels of literacy and numeracy required in the workplace.

In Norway the main policy initiative to reduce early leaving from VET is the certificate of practice, aimed at VET students who have difficulties completing ordinary VET. It is

a two-year programme that corresponds to the first two levels of upper secondary but does not give the student a full qualification. Once the certificate of practice is completed, students can continue in an ordinary apprenticeship contract to become fully qualified. The pilot introducing this initiative has been extended and is planned to be made permanent from the end of 2016, where all counties are encouraged to implement it.

*Source:* Cedefop desk research and interviews.

Such transition-stage-focused initiatives have been introduced for several reasons. First, research indicates that young people need more support than before to navigate through the study and career pathways due to an ever more complex net of services, providers and study routes. This has had an impact on ELVET as many have become vulnerable at these education and work transition points. Second, it is recognised that there are students who are not sufficiently qualified/skilled/prepared/motivated to enter VET (or the next stage of learning in general) and need additional time and support to explore study options, improve grades, gain work experience or gain new vocational, academic and life skills.

Financial incentives are used as a way of encouraging:

- (a) VET providers to address ELVET;
- (b) employers to take on less attractive students – in terms of skills and capabilities – as apprentices and trainees;
- (c) VET students to take up and complete VET studies.

Table 8 lists relevant initiatives, and Boxes 9 and 10 present some examples.

Table 8. **Financial incentives to reduce ELVET**

Country	Measures
	<b>Measures analysed in depth</b>
HU	Integrated pedagogical system (IPR)
NL	Drive to reduce dropout rates
	<b>Other examples</b>
BE-fr	Financial incentives to reduce ELVET in the apprenticeship sector
DE	Training bonus for employers
DE	Tailored placements scheme of the chamber of crafts in Saxony
DK	Educational benefit as a replacement for cash benefits for unemployed people
FR	Financial sanctions to families when children (until age16) fail to attend school
UK-Northern Ireland	Targets for further education colleges established by the Department for Employment and Learning
UK-Northern Ireland	Care to learn initiative, providing funding for single parents for covering the costs for childcare

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

As most VET providers are undergoing many reforms, incentives can be a useful way to get them to 'prioritise' the issue of dropout. In the UK, for example, provider funding depends on the success rate of VET graduates in terms of long-term employment.

Box 9. **Financial incentives for providers: examples from the Netherlands and the UK-Northern Ireland**

In the Netherlands, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, Dutch municipalities and education institutions (both basic vocational education and VET) have signed a tripartite agreement to reduce ELET under the strategy The drive to reduce dropouts initiated by Ministry Education in 2008. During administrative consultations, the alderman (at the municipality level), the executive boards of VET schools and the principals of secondary education, look at ways to use the funds provided by the ministry to reduce ELET. The account managers of the ministry oversee that these meetings are planned and discuss ELET numbers at regional level with the education institutions and municipalities. An example of initiative generated within this process is increased cooperation between VET schools and employers in the same region to increase the prospect of internships for vulnerable youth.

The Department for Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland sets, at the beginning of each year, enrolment, achievement and success targets for further education colleges, which are directly linked to funding of further education college provision. Attainment of these targets is monitored through the further education activity system.

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

Incentives can encourage employers to consider applicants they would not have considered otherwise due to the additional time and support they may need. It is a long-standing mainstream tradition for some countries to offer a wage subsidy to employers who take on an apprentice, while in others this is a more recent trend. The logic behind incentives for (at-risk) VET students is to enable and motivate them to enter and remain in learning as opposed to dropping out over financial concerns.

**Box 10. Financial incentives for employers and learners: examples from Belgium-fr, Denmark and Germany**

In the French Community of Belgium, there are financial incentives to reduce ELVET in the apprenticeship sector. As well as employers' incentives to hire apprentices, monthly grants are given to apprentices as well as an annual bonus for apprentices for successful completion of a year (\*). Interviewees noted that grants and bonuses are an important factor in motivating young people to pursue their apprenticeship.

Denmark reformed cash benefits for the unemployed on 1 January 2014. For those under the age of 30, the reform has replaced the cash benefit with an educational benefit; these unemployed young people (some of them early leavers from education and training) will receive an amount which is at the same size as the education state grant for students. The education grant (and education benefit) is lower than the cash benefit. This is aimed at incentivising people to enter education or employment.

Germany has introduced a training bonus for employers who offer additional in-company training places for young people, particularly for those who have been seeking a training placement for some time without success because they are low-skilled or early school leavers and need special support. The subsidy can also be used to help apprentices from insolvent companies to find a placement where they can finish their apprenticeship. There are also other projects that use financial incentives to help low-qualified youth to find an apprenticeship.

The chamber of crafts in Saxony (Germany) has introduced a tailored-placements scheme. The chamber works with associations for young people with social problems and with low levels of qualifications who could not find a training post on their own, and also supports small and medium-sized enterprises when taking in such young people as apprentices. There is financial compensation for the apprentice from the Public Employment Service (PES) and the company only has to pay social insurance contribution. Also, many companies make efforts to prevent early leaving via financial incentives for good achievement.

(\*) IFAPME, Institut Wallon de Formation en Alternance et des Indépendants et Petites et Moyennes Entreprises: <http://www.ifapme.be/formations-a-un-metier/trouver-une-formation-a-un-metier/formation-apprentissage/droits-et-obligations.html>

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

There are programmes, for example in Belgium-fr, Denmark, France and Hungary, that offer individual VET providers additional resources or expertise to address early leaving in VET (Table 9 and Box 11).

Table 9. ELVET resources or expertise for VET schools

Country	Measures
	<b>Measures analysed in depth</b>
BE-fr	<i>Expairs</i> project
DK	<i>Retention caravan (Fastholdelseskaravane)</i> and its follow-up initiative retention taskforce ( <i>Fastholdelses taskforce</i> )
HU	Integrated pedagogical system (IPR)
	<b>Other examples</b>
FR	Teams of experts in regional education authorities ( <i>mission de lutte contre le décrochage scolaire</i> )
PT	The TEIP programme ( <i>territórios educativos de intervenção prioritária</i> , educational territories of priority intervention) assigns specialised technicians (psychologists, mediators, etc.) to clusters of public schools (including VET providers) to support population at risk

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

Typically this involves either additional funding or an external expert coming into the school/institute to oversee or help develop and implement a comprehensive ELVET prevention strategy. The expert stays for a specified period or visits the provider regularly to support implementation and help the provider to tackle problems as they emerge. The expert is normally employed by the authority in charge of the programme or the schools/providers may be given funding to employ one.

**Box 11. Resources and expertise for VET schools: examples from Belgium-fr, Denmark and France**

In the French Community of Belgium, additional financial resources are provided to schools with a high percentage of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Schools are encouraged to develop additional pedagogical activities that aim at improving academic achievement and better school atmosphere. These resources are mostly granted to VET schools as they are the ones with the highest concentration of vulnerable students. In the *Expairs* project, VET schools receive external expert support for developing internal initiatives to address early leaving in the first year of VET. The *Expairs* project in Wallonia involves 45 VET providers which work in groups to develop and implement new approaches to address early leaving in VET, especially in the third year of VET (the first year of secondary VET) when most dropouts take place.

In Denmark, the *Retention caravan* initiative (*Fastholdelseskaravane*) (2008-13) and its follow-up retention taskforce initiative (*Fastholdelses taskforce*) (2013-16) were set up to attract and retain higher numbers of students from ethnic minority backgrounds in VET by developing the competences of VET teachers, trainers and head teachers in addressing ELVET. The initiative provides resources for VET providers, including a dedicated retention coordinator. The quality patrol initiative (2010-13) collected and



disseminated knowledge, learning good practices related to existing local initiatives to reduce ELVET.

In France, to ensure a coordinated approach, teams of experts (*mission de lutte contre le décrochage scolaire*) have been appointed in each regional education authority. The missions of the expert teams are to: provide expert support to local schools in defining a strategy against early leaving; take care of students age 16+ who are early leavers or at-risk of leaving and find them second chance opportunities; and coordinate second chance opportunities at regional level within the *Foquale* (\*) networks. In each VET school with high rates of early leaving a reference person is appointed to monitor early leaving, liaise with parents, and coordinate actions in schools using a regional team of experts.

(\*) The *Foquale* networks gather all second chance initiatives developed by the *Education Nationale*, regional expert teams (*mission de lutte contre le décrochage scolaire*, MDLS), guidance information services, associations, etc., and aim at ensuring better coordination and good practice exchange between stakeholders at local level.

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

Such programmes are typically introduced in recognition of the fact that not all VET providers have the expertise to address high levels of early leaving or they lack the drive to prioritise the topic.

Improvement of VET teacher skills to identify distress signals and give prompt support to at-risk students is particularly pertinent for the VET sector in countries where the sector attracts higher than average share of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Training can include practical advice on how to explore and find out why students are absent from school, how to identify students that have emotional or psychological problems and therefore display risk signals that, unless addressed, may lead to disengagement, how to improve student motivation, and how to improve their attendance rates.

Table 10 lists relevant initiatives, and Box 12 presents some of them.

Table 10. **Training teachers and in-company trainers to deal with ELVET**

Country	Measures
	<b>Measures analysed in depth</b>
	No such measures have been selected for in-depth analysis
	<b>Other examples</b>
DE, ES, IT, AT, PT	In-VET project
AT	forum for trainers organised by the local career centre (AMG) in Tyrol
NL	Project <i>Absence 18+ we miss you</i> providing training for staff of the regional registration and coordination centres (RMC)

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

**Box 12. Training teachers and in-company trainers to deal with ELVET: examples from the Netherlands, Austria and the European in-VET project**

In Austria, the local career centre (AMG) in Tyrol seeks to improve the quality of apprenticeships by organising a forum for trainers together with social partners; the goal is to help certified trainers to improve interaction with their apprentices and so contribute to efforts to prevent early leaving.

A recent initiative in the Netherlands has involved the training of staff of the regional registration and coordination centres (RMC). There are 39 of these across the Netherlands and their role is to coordinate the reporting and recording of early school leavers and ensure referral and relocation opportunities in education. Training was provided under the project *Absence 18+ we miss you* and focused on addressing absenteeism of students older than 18.

The in-VET project, involving partners from Germany, Spain, Italy, Austria and Portugal, funded by the European Commission, is designed to support VET professionals to detect students at risk of dropping out at an early stage. It involves the development of an online-questionnaire to identify young people at risk, counselling guidelines for VET professionals to support young people at risk, and an online portal with training methods for VET professionals to work against dropout. It is being piloted in several countries, including Portugal where it involves several professional schools (all publicly funded private schools from the network of the National association of VET schools (ANESPO, 2011) (\*).

(\*) In-VET project. <http://invet-project.eu/>

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

### 3.2. Intervention measures

Three different types of early leaving and VET-specific intervention measures are discussed in this section and introduced in Table 11, followed by examples.

Early warning systems come in different shapes and sizes but typically involve recruiting a dedicated professional at the VET school (or local authority) in charge of tracking down absent students, meeting with them to find out why they are absent and what problems they might be facing, communicating with parents, and escalating a concern about a student if they feel like the tools and resources they have available are not going to be enough to help him/her. The logic behind the early warning systems is that the earlier VET teachers and trainers identify distress signals and intervene, the better chance they have of supporting and encouraging students to stay in learning. They might be truancy-focused or broader and more sophisticated approaches centred on early intervention.

Table 11. **Overview of key features of intervention measures**

	<b>Early warning units</b>	<b>Professional support</b>	<b>Short time-out measures</b>
Goals	To alert teachers and authorities of students who are starting to show first signs of dropping out and enable them to put together a rapid response.	To provide support in a form of counselling, guidance and mentoring for VET students on a one-to-one basis or by a team of professionals to ensure that at-risk students are supported coherently and thoroughly to minimise the risk of ELET.	To give VET students who experience personal or academic difficulties a respite from their studies in and out of normal classroom or school setting. They can first focus on addressing their personal problems or short-comings in behaviour or skills and then getting one-on-one and small group support to catch up on their studies.
Intervention logic	ELVET can be reduced by intervening proactively as soon as students start sending distress signals, rather than reacting when their decision to leave is taken.	Ensure at-risk students and apprentices are supported in the areas they face problems coherently and comprehensively by a person or a team of professionals from the same organisation, who may come to know students and their needs better.	Introduced in recognition of the fact that the VET system hosts students who face difficult personal, health, social and academic difficulties or motivational problems, which may require a more in-depth response than a mainstream school setting is able to offer. The time out measures allow such students to take the time off to focus on addressing their personal and/or academic concerns with help of professionals in a setting which does not resemble a normal classroom.
Target groups	VET students starting to show first signs of risk of dropping out (e.g. absenteeism).	VET students and apprentices with academic, personal, social, health or vocational challenges.	VET students with academic, personal, social, health or vocational challenges.
Activities	Tools to monitor absenteeism, behaviour and study results, supporting students identified through this method.	Apprentice coaching, mentoring and one-on-one case management.	Non-formal learning, career exploration, small group activities, one-on-one support from mentors or professionals, learning in and out-of-school setting.
Examples of planned outcomes	For young people: improved satisfaction with studies, improved motivation and capability to continue studies. Structural: reduced ELVET and, increased completion rates.	For young people: improved motivation to continue studies, enhanced capability to continue studies, improved grades/learning outcomes. Structural: reduced ELVET and increased completion rates.	For young people: improved motivation and capability to continue studies, improved grades/learning outcomes. Structural: reduced ELVET, increased completion rates.
Prevalence	Many provider and city level initiatives, fewer larger established practices.	A common practice, albeit the measures rarely reach all VET students in need of support.	Few examples across the countries reviewed.

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

Table 12 lists relevant initiatives, and Box 13 presents some of them.

Table 12. **Early warning systems to reach out to learners at risk of early leaving**

Country	Measures
	<b>Measures analysed in depth</b>
FR	Platform for monitoring and coordination of early leavers (PSAD)
	<b>Other examples</b>
BE-fr	Mediation units in Wallonia
BE-fl	Municipal project <i>COACH in het Kwadraat</i>
DE	Truancy programme ( <i>Schulverweigerung – Die 2. Chance</i> )
FR	Interministerial information exchange system (SIEI)
PT	Absence monitoring tool in a private VET school from the Centre Region

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

Box 13. **Early warning systems to reach out to learners at risk of early leaving: examples from Belgium, Hungary and Portugal**

In Belgium, absent students are referred to mediation units which deal with relationship problems between learners, parents and school personnel, and between learners and school or employer staff. In Wallonia, there are 86 mediators serving all secondary schools, students and parents. In Brussels, a new apprentice-specific early warning service is being set up which organises meetings every two/three weeks with central services, teachers and employers to discuss students who may be at risk of dropping out and to identify solutions.

The municipal project *COACH in het Kwadraat* implemented in the city of Hasselt in Flanders supports schools by providing them with data on truancy to inform a school-specific action plan. The project is based on making school management staff aware of the severity of truancy and the development of action plans specific to each school which should become part of the school's policy. It also involves the implementation of an early warning system, whereby the municipality and the secretariats of the schools in the city record absenteeism data from schools. The project started with three schools during 2014/15, and will be extended to more schools. Once the schools their action plans in place, they enter a 'learning network' for the exchange of experience among them.

A private VET school from the Centre Region in Portugal has put in place a sophisticated absence monitoring tool that allows for immediate action in case of truancy. This school has a very strict framework, where absences are closely monitored, and the organisation of classes and work-based learning, is similar to that of an enterprise (students have to dress in their working uniform).

In Hungary the *Act on national public education* stipulates the launch of an early warning system complemented with pedagogical tools aiming at providing effective support to children at risk of dropping out. This system is currently under development.

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

A student-centred, individualised approach to learning, for example through professional support (counselling, guidance, mentoring, individual learning plans or case management) has always been a core feature of compensatory ELVET measures but it is increasingly also a feature of mainstream VET programmes and used as a way of preventing ELVET.

The current analysis provided evidence that there are more countries where VET students have access to individualised VET programmes or individualised support (see examples in Table 13 and Box 14).

Table 13. **Professional support: counselling, guidance, mentoring and case management**

Country	Measures
<b>Measures analysed in depth</b>	
AT	Apprenticeship coaching
AT	Youth coaching scheme
DE	<i>Carpo</i> project, implemented in Baden-Wuerttemberg
DE	Nationwide training mentors (VerA) scheme of the Senior Expert Service
DE	Pilot project QuABB
DE	Vocational training accompanying measures, abH
DE	Youth Labour Employment Agency (JBA) Hamburg
DK	Youth guidance centres
EE	Pathfinder centres
FR	Experimentation of the student association (AFEV)
LU	Local action for youth
NL	<i>Medical advice for sick-reported students</i> (MASS)
<b>Other examples</b>	
HR	Pragma (NGO) programmes aimed at reducing ELVET
PT	Projects <i>Mediators for school success</i> and <i>Vocations</i> of the association Entrepreneurs for Social Inclusion (EPIS)

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

Many apprentices, in Germany and Austria for example, have access to continuous, one-on-one support from a professional coach or a volunteer mentor through initiatives such as *VerA* and *Carpo*. This involves appointment of volunteer or paid coaches who remain in contact with the apprentices from the start of their apprenticeship journey until the end. They identify potential problem issues and work together with the student, provider and the employer to address them in the hope of reducing the risk of them dropping out. They might also offer technical and academic support for apprentices, such as special teaching and socio-pedagogical support to reduce language and education defects and/or

encourage learning theoretical knowledge and practical skills. They may also provide conflict management assistance.

**Box 14. Counselling, guidance, mentoring and case management: examples from Germany and Austria**

The *Carpo* project, in Baden-Wuerttemberg, offers comprehensive support to both young people and companies, and is especially targeted at youth with special needs. Young people receive individual support, mentoring and advice both before and during training; companies providing training also receive comprehensive advice and support, from the beginning to the end of training if required. Mentors are provided with supervision and continuing education so that they can cope adequately with the different problems that may arise.

The nationwide training mentors (VerA) scheme of the Senior Expert Service (SES) in Germany is a new mentoring scheme for apprentices. The mentors are voluntary senior citizens who are retired trained professionals and who draw on their individual experiences to support apprentices on a one-to-one basis. The mentoring offers an opportunity for apprentices to discuss openly (as the mentor is external to the company) technical issues and practical work-related tasks with an experienced professional.. Mentors may also help apprentices practice for their exams, motivate those who are lacking enthusiasm and address any possible conflicts or misunderstandings between the employer and the apprentice. The mentors attend a two-day training course.

The Chamber of Trade and Commerce of Hesse (Germany) has introduced the *QuABB* project, which provides mentors to support trainees, particularly in regions and branches with high dropout rates. The project was piloted in 2009-15 and is being run as a State programme in all Hesse regions since July 2015. It targets youth with multiple problems and has established an early warning system for the identification of problems that may lead to dropout. Mentors cooperate closely with VET schools and the responsible training advisors at the chambers. The programme has had a good response from companies and trainers who increasingly participate in workshops offered by the chamber to expand their professional expertise in training.

The apprentice coaching scheme has been piloted in some Austrian regions since 2012. The scheme offers assistance to apprentices during their training to boost completion and pass rates. The coaches assess the extra training and coaching needs of apprentices through an initial interview and design a longer-term support plan accordingly. Other actors, such as trainers or VET teachers, may be asked to join in.

*Source:* Cedefop desk research and interviews.

The degree of support required by at-risk students varies according to their personal, health and family circumstances. Some students identified as being at risk of dropping out may get easily 'back on track' with their studies, for example, with the help of a mentor; but students with more complex issues may require more or different support than guidance practitioners, mentors or coaches can offer. They may need support from professionals such as counsellors or

psychologists or teams of professionals, for instance multi-professional school care teams and student support services (Box 15).

**Box 15. Professional support for different types of learners: examples from Croatia, Luxembourg and Austria**

An NGO in Zagreb (Croatia), Pragma, has several programmes aimed at reducing ELVET. It has set up a Counselling Centre for Youth at risk of early leaving, in cooperation with the Social Welfare Centre of Zagreb, which identifies at-risk students and directs them to the centre. Pragma also runs a programme for family therapy and one for support groups for students with difficulties in adapting to new schools or new teachers, or to living in a student dormitory. Pragma's mentoring programme is also effective as it trains volunteers to mentor at-risk students by developing a relationship based on trust and empowering students to improve their learning habits and continue with education.

The Luxembourgish initiative *Local action for youth*, under the services in charge of VET of the Ministry of National Education, among other activities assists pupils during important transition periods. It primarily provides support to young people in their transition from school to working life; to young people who have dropped out of education and want to return to school; and, more generally, to any young person between 15 and 25 years of age looking for information and guidance in relation to education, training and labour market issues.

Similarly, in Austria, the government introduced its youth coaching scheme in 2013 after extensive local and regional piloting. The scheme addresses a key factor in early leaving; the lack of tailored support at crucial transition points, including transition from the ninth grade to VET or during reintegration into VET. By providing free, personalised support and guidance from 'youth coaches' to pupils at risk of dropping out in the ninth year, the scheme aims to reduce the risk of early leaving, especially among foreign-born students. The scheme is also targeting those not in education, employment or training (NEET) with the aim of helping them to return to education or training.

*Source:* Cedefop desk research and interviews.

Short-term time-out measures target VET students facing personal, social, health or academic difficulties or lack of motivation to continue studies. They offer a break from studies away from normal classroom or school setting for a period from a few weeks up to a year. The goal of the break is to enable students to focus on addressing their personal or academic problems and then receive one-on-one and small group support to catch up on their studies. The ultimate goal is to reintegrate the learners back onto their mainstream VET programme (Table 14 and Box 16).

Table 14. **Short time-out measures**

Country	Measures
	<b>Measures analysed in depth</b>
	No such measures have been analysed in depth
	<b>Other examples</b>
BE-fr	School reintegration initiatives (SAS)
BE-fl	Bridging VET programmes in Flemish cities, such as the youth competence centres in Antwerp or the House of Professions in Ghent
FR	Programme to prevent early leaving in VET-school in Nice
IT	The <i>Anno Unico</i> project

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

Box 16. **Short time-out measures: examples from Belgium, France and Italy**

School reintegration initiatives (SAS) (\*) in the French Community of Belgium offer temporary social, education and learning support to students who are often absent from school, who have serious relationship problems at school, or who were expelled. There are 12 SAS in the Wallonia-Brussels Region. They aim at motivating students and reintegrating them in school after a three- to six-month period in an informal environment where young people can increase their self-esteem and develop a new life project via alternative pedagogical methods (such as cultural activities, volunteering, theatre workshops, and short internships).

Different Flemish cities offer bridging VET programmes for VET students who are facing difficulties at school or during work placement. These allow students to take time off to develop employability skills (such as arriving on time, how to communicate with superior staff and colleagues) and/or social skills. They are delivered by staff external to schools and there are different types of programme according to the level of work readiness. For example, the youth competence centres were created in Antwerp to help young people to identify their talents, competences and skills and to develop these; they also help those who have dropped out from education without a qualification to return to it. The House of Professions in Ghent, an NGO with the participation of the business sector, has a similar goal. Students take on the role of professionals, through different ludic activities, and then discuss what they have learned about the professions and about their own competences and skills. These centres aim to prevent wrong study choices, which often lead to dropout.

Since 2006, a VET school in Nice (France) has run a programme to prevent early leaving; the target group are students in their first year of VET who are frequently absent or are uncertain about their study choice. In cooperation with social workers, students at risk of dropping out are taken into a three week 'orientation programme', during which they choose which classes to attend and which part of the week is dedicated to the programme. The programme always includes visits to companies, two hours of social/psychological support per week, after-school mentoring from local NGOs and informal workshops (on topics such as art, writing and communication, photography and basic skills workshops). Between 15 and 30 students follow the



programme each year. After conclusion, about half of the students decide to change their pathway or the course they attend or even the school.

An association located in a small city outside of Milan (Italy) has set up the project *Anno Unico* (unique year). This gives an opportunity for young people who have dropped out or are at risk of dropping out, to take a year off to try out professional skills, and to put them into practice in an internship. Professionals involved in the project mention as key factors for success keeping the groups small and a close student-tutor relationship. Although the programme also includes working in basic competences, tutors and trainers have primarily an advisory and counselling role, not just helping youth with educational content.

(\*) Created in 2000 as pilot, the SAS became an official part of the strategy of fighting against early leaving in 2010.

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

### 3.3. Compensatory measures

The compensatory measures identified in this analysis can be categorised into three groups:

- (a) measures that open up VET systems for new groups of learners, typically young people who have dropped out of learning before completing a qualification that is a minimum requirement for higher levels of learning;
- (b) second chance VET programmes;
- (c) measures that provide a supported pathway back to learning and use VET pedagogies.

Their key features are introduced in the Table 15, and discussed further with examples.

Legal access to VET courses for unqualified youth has been opened up recently in several Member States. Such reform usually targets young adults who have dropped out of education before completing a qualification that is a minimum requirement for progressing to higher levels in the system. In Spain, for example, recent legal changes opened up an opportunity for young people who do not meet standard academic requirements to access intermediate and advanced level VET studies <sup>(13)</sup>. Other Member States have accompanied such measures with financial incentives as a way of enabling some early leavers to return to VET. As an example, a training voucher scheme was introduced in 2009

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<sup>(13)</sup> Spain was not included in the countries analysed in depth for this study. This information was identified through desk research (Government of Spain, 2013).

in Estonia, to support return to VET (retraining and continuing training) for unemployed adults, especially the low-skilled (Table 16 and Box 17).

Table 15. **Overview of key features of intervention measures**

	<b>Opening up VET for new groups of learners</b>	<b>Second chance VET programmes</b>	<b>Second chance comprehensive reintegration programmes</b>
Goals	To open up VET system for new groups of learners, typically young adults who previously were not eligible to (re-)enter VET.	To offer a second chance to obtain a VET qualification.	To encourage dropouts to return to education/training and prepare them academically, socially and vocationally to reintegrate into formal learning or employment.
Intervention logic	Break up/remove entrance barriers to learners who are keen to return to VET.	Second chance programmes tend to offer VET outside normal study hours, with a different methodology (e.g. more hands-on, more tailored to the interests of the learner), and at an individual pace. They often take into account prior learning.	To utilise VET or VET pedagogies as a way of enticing young people to return to learning.
Target groups	Predominantly young adults who have dropped out of learning before completing a qualification that is a minimum requirement for higher levels of learning.	Young adults who have already dropped out of education but would like another chance to participate in formal learning. It can also target learners at risk of early leaving	Early leavers, especially those who have dropped out as a result of more complex needs, such as personal, social, behavioural or health-related problems.
Activities	Removing legal barriers, offering incentives to participate.	Recognition of prior learning, school and work-based VET.	Work trials, guidance and counselling, group work, company visits, practical learning in workshops, support in basic skills, sports and cultural activities.
Examples of planned outcomes	For young people: improved qualification level, improved motivation to study, improved vocational skills. Structural: reduction of ELET rates, improved participation in VET.		
Prevalence	An area of reform in many Member States.	Available in most countries but the flexibility of the programmes to accommodate the diverse needs of their target population varies.	Established practice in most Member States: their scale and reach vary.

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

Table 16. **Opening up VET for new groups of learners**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Measures</b>
<b>Measures analysed in depth</b>	
EE	KUTSE programme
<b>Other examples</b>	
BE-fl	Network youth coaching in Antwerp
EE	Training voucher scheme to support return to VET (retraining and continuing training) for unemployed adults

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

**Box 17. Opening up VET for new groups of learners: example from BE-fl**

The network youth coaching in Antwerp, Flanders, is a project involving several schools and VET providers. Young people who have dropped out from education can gain positive first work experience as a youth coach at a VET school and, at the same time, enrol in a study programme in adult education. The coaches act as intermediary between teachers and students, and mediate during conflicts. They are allowed to follow their own study up to two days a week and still receive a full-time salary. In 2014 there were 60 to 70 youth coaches.

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

Second chance VET programmes have been developed as new, formal VET pathways for young adults who have already dropped out of education but would like another chance to participate in formal learning. The rationale is to offer them a second opportunity, typically with opportunities to study outside normal school hours, with a different methodology (more hands-on, more tailored to the interests of the learner), and at an individual pace, considering existing work experience (Table 17 and Box 18).

Table 17. **Second chance VET programmes**

Country	Measures
<b>Measures analysed in depth:</b>	
FR	New chance secondary school in the region of Lyon
FR	Innovative pole ( <i>pôle innovant lycéen</i> , PIL)
IT	<i>Piazza dei mestieri</i> (crafts square) in Turin
IT	ASLAM ( <i>Associazione scuole lavoro Alto Milanese</i> – School work association Alto Milanese)
<b>Other examples:</b>	
FR	Contract future jobs ( <i>contrats emplois d'avenir</i> )
FR	Social life integration contract ( <i>contrat d'insertion dans la vie sociale</i> , CIVIS)
PL	<i>Your career your choice</i> ( <i>Twoja Kariera-Twój Wybór</i> ) project

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

Box 18. **Second chance VET programmes: examples from France, Italy and Poland**

Contract future jobs (*contrats emplois d'avenir*) are a second chance opportunity of training and work experience for young people with few or no qualifications in France. The competences acquired on-the-job are assessed and certified, increasing the qualification levels of participants. Also, the social life integration contract (*contrat d'insertion dans la vie sociale*, CIVIS) offers 16 to 25 year-olds with difficulties in entering the labour market an opportunity to follow a one-year apprenticeship scheme and receive individual guidance.

The initiative *Piazza dei mestieri* (crafts square) (Italy) aims to provide young people in compulsory education, as well as unemployed young people and adults, with an alternative educational offer. By combining within one space (the square) the school and the work place (a restaurant, a pub, a chocolate factory and a printing press), it offers students the chance to apply immediately what they are learning in school, in an environment where there are already real clients and expectations.

The Polish Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy (MPIPS) has, since 2012, developed various programmes (in addition to the standard services offered to the unemployed and jobseekers by labour offices), which include measures aiming at the economic activation of people under 30. It is the case of the your career your choice project (*Twoja Kariera-Twój Wybór*), run by several public employment services, with the goal to design and test new training measures for the unemployed under 30 years of age. Participants take part in on-the-job training and school-based VET.

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

Second chance comprehensive reengagement programmes provide supported pathways back to learning for young people from general education and VET backgrounds. The support provided by such programmes start from the 'basics' such as helping young people to rediscover an interest in learning and to learn about the importance of showing up to school or work on time. They employ multi-professional teams who identify and address the full range of barriers faced by the young person. Once the young people feel more ready and settled, they are given opportunities to take part in education and training. Many of the learning opportunities utilise pedagogies that derive from VET, such as workshop-based practical training, assignments for companies or short work placements.

Such programmes do not tend to lead to formal qualifications but are used as a way of stimulating interest in learning or upskilling learners and offering a stepping stone to improving their chance of finding a job or a study place within formal education and training (Table 18 and Box 19).

Table 18. **Second chance comprehensive reengagement programmes using VET**

Country	Measures
	<b>Measures analysed in depth:</b>
AT	Production schools ( <i>Produktionsschule</i> ; formerly known as <i>AusbildungsFIT</i> , ready for education and training)
FR	Second chance schools
FR	EPIDE insertion service
IE	<i>Youthreach</i>
IE	Ballymun youth guarantee pilot
LU	Second chance school
NL	Getting started
PL	Voluntary labour corps (VLC)
PT	Second chance school of Matosinhos
UK-England	Youth contract
UK-Northern Ireland	Training for success
	<b>Other examples:</b>
DK	Production schools
PT	<i>Arco Maior</i> project (Porto)

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

Box 19. **Second chance comprehensive reengagement programmes using VET: examples from Denmark and Portugal**

Denmark has a comprehensive VET reengagement programme in the form of production schools. Regulated since 1980s, this nationwide locally established independent school system has become a key instrument in achieving the national target of 95% of all youth completing upper secondary education by 2015. This measure aims to address the disengagement of early leavers and NEETs under 25 years and reintegrate them into formal education or employment. Through participation in practical work and production workshops which sell to businesses, these young people can improve their skills, rediscover an interest in learning and learn how to live a structured life with boundaries.

The second chance school of Matosinhos in Portugal, since 2008 has offered a comprehensive reengagement programme that includes VET courses under a programme for unqualified youth. It has a unique education and training programme that includes vocational training, artistic training, academic education, personal and social development and educational support and psychosocial intervention. The training programme is adapted to each learner according to his or her training needs and vocational interests, based on skills assessments and personal portfolios. In this one to two-year programme, school work following an official education and training structure usually only starts in the third trimester; prior to that there is an engagement and preparation phase that involves many different activities, such as a theatre programme that aims at resocialising youth and waking up their curiosity.

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

## CHAPTER 4.

# Key features of effective policies

This chapter analyses the key features that made the 44 measures analysed in-depth successful and how these respond to the factors leading to early leaving. It also discusses which activities are particularly important for different profiles of young people at risk of dropping out or who are already early leavers. It presents, key issues around the design and implementation of effective measures.

### 4.1. Successful measures analysed





The factors that lead young people to disengage from education and training to the point of dropping out are discussed in detail in Volume I (Cedefop, 2016, Chapter 5). These factors feed the rationale that underpins the design of the measures analysed, most being addressed by at least one (but frequently several) measures reviewed. The factors which were not clearly covered by the measures analysed are:





- (a) gender;
- (b) working conditions;
- (c) overall economic context;
- (d) labour market regulation.

The last three are outside the scope of influence of measures to address early leaving. For gender, it is possible to imagine measures focusing specifically on the needs of young men (who are more frequently at risk of early leaving), but this aspect was not clearly addressed in any of the policies analysed.



Table 19 shows the relationships between the factors leading to early leaving, the key features of measures, and examples of measures reviewed.

Table 19. Relating factors leading to ELET and key features of measures analysed

Factors leading to ELET	Key features related to this issue	Examples of measures
<p>Non-supportive family environment</p> 	<p>Parental involvement, giving parents the tools to support the education progression and choices of their children; informing them about the education choices their children face.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in the UK scheme <i>Training for success</i> (Northern Ireland), mentors play a key role in supporting the relationship between participant – parent – employer, among other aspects of support;</li> <li>• in the German scheme vocational orientation programme (BOP) parents are invited to the feedback discussions after the analysis of learner’s potential;</li> <li>• the Dutch scheme <i>Medical advice for sick-reported students</i> systematically involves parents in the discussions about youngster’s self-reported sickness, his/her medical condition and how this influences education achievement.</li> </ul>
<p>Difficulties related to health, well-being, social issues, poverty</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• case-management. Work in parallel on the full range of challenges the person faces. Young person is in contact with one intermediary;</li> <li>• stabilisation of the personal situation of young person.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the apprenticeship coaching scheme in Austria includes case management, during which the coach involves other institutions in the coaching process, to support the apprentice in individual issues; this could be therapists, doctors, debt counselling, youth welfare or the PES. The case management approach ensures that the coach is the main contact person to organise every step together with the apprentice;</li> <li>• youth labour market agencies in Germany are part of the federal plan to improve cooperation of stakeholders involved in federal and regional programmes dealing with career guidance and counselling for disadvantaged youth and their integration in education, training and the labour market. They offer one-stop shops for guidance but also deal with many other issues including personal difficulties.</li> </ul>
<p>Students of migrant or ethnic minority origin being more frequently at risk of ELET</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• involve parents and inform them about the education system of the country;</li> <li>• desegregate the education system;</li> <li>• make certain pathways that can lead to success attractive to young people with minority background.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in Denmark, the <i>Retention caravan</i> aimed to increase young people’s motivation for choosing VET or a basic VET course, and to give them an understanding of the value of a VET education, as well as career opportunities, in Danish society;</li> <li>• in Hungary the <i>Integrated pedagogical system</i> aimed to integrate children and young people facing difficulties, in particular those with Roma background, into mainstream education and so destigmatise them.</li> </ul>
<p>Education underachievement</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide opportunities for remedial training, tutoring as part of mainstream programmes;</li> <li>• integrate training covering basic skills depending on individual’s needs;</li> <li>• individualised learning plans;</li> <li>• activities aimed at building confidence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in the French Community of Belgium, the following measures were taken to prevent ELET at system level: forbid grade repetition and require teachers to provide remedial training if learners are lagging behind;</li> <li>• in the UK, <i>Training for success</i> targets young people who dropped out of education and training. About 40-45% of the cohort has important gaps in basic skills. For this group the programme delivers ‘essential skills’ curriculum to enable learners to make up for skill deficits and achieve qualification;</li> </ul>

Factors leading to ELET	Key features related to this issue	Examples of measures
	and motivation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>in Luxembourg, specific courses target pupils aged 15 to 18 years who lack the necessary skills to find a job and do not fulfil the requirements for entry into technical and vocational education and training. These courses also provide sociocultural, sporting or artistic activities to build confidence and motivation.</li> </ul>
<p>Absence of positive future vision for oneself and students' inappropriate orientation</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>youth-centred development of goals through coaching and mentoring;</li> <li>opportunities to try different professional orientations (tasting).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>in Austria, the youth coaching scheme provides young people at risk of early leaving with 15 or even up to 30 hours of coaching to accompany them in the development of professional and educational projects and their realisation;</li> <li>in Ireland, the Ballymun youth guarantee pilot project provides holistic guidance services which support the young person over several weeks/months and involve engagement of the person, assessment of youngster's profile, development and implementation of a career plan;</li> <li>in the UK, the youth contract provides young people with the possibility of a pre-engagement activity during which the individual's reading for a given pathway is tested. This allows young people to experiment before deciding on their progression.</li> </ul>
<p>Negative self-perception linked to education failure</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>motivational and confidence building activities that include sport or cultural activities;</li> <li>getting students interested and motivated in general and in a specific profession.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>in Poland, participants in the Voluntary Labour Corps work towards getting a vocational qualification but also to develop their personal and social skills necessary to be autonomous. Development of their personal and social skills takes place mainly through organising extra-learning and leisure time activities: cultural activities, sports, contests, events, to stimulate development of young people's interests;</li> <li>in France, in the insertion centres (which share certain characteristics with the past military service) young people participate in regular sport activities and sociocultural activities.</li> </ul>
<p>Programme content and organisation</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>integrating work-based learning and simulations;</li> <li>organising theoretical and practical learning to enable rapid transfer between the two contexts;</li> <li>individualised programmes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>all the second chance schools analysed (FR, PT, LU) offer a different education approach from mainstream education. Theoretical learning is closely integrated with practice to ensure its relevance to the learners;</li> <li>in France, the innovation pole uses a pedagogical approach based on the theory of productive learning which is activity-based, and individualised.</li> </ul>
<p>Lack of readiness to work</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develop work-readiness by working on skills such as time-management, communication, working in a team;</li> <li>provide work-based learning and close-to-real simulations as a motivational measure;</li> <li>cooperate with employers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>all second chance schools based on the model of factory schools analysed (PT, AT, IT) integrate a school-level company which offers real working context for young people, in particular those who struggle finding a regular apprenticeship position;</li> <li>in Northern Ireland (UK), apprenticeships were strengthened as part of the strategy to improve completion rates at upper secondary level;</li> <li>in France, the second chance schools systematically combine working experience with school-based training modules;</li> </ul>



Factors leading to ELET	Key features related to this issue	Examples of measures
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>in Italy, Turin, the crafts square provides young people in compulsory education, as well as unemployed young people and adults, with an alternative education offer. By combining within one space (the 'square') the school and the work place (a restaurant, a pub, a chocolate factory and a printing press), it offers students of the school the chance to apply immediately what they are learning in school in an environment where there are already real clients and expectations.</li> </ul>
<p>Relationships in the workplace and in the classroom</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>accountability for all teachers and trainers to tackle the problem of ELET;</li> <li>school-level action plans to tackle ELET;</li> <li>support not only the young person but also the apprenticeship company in conflict resolution.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>in Denmark, the <i>Retention caravan</i> and its successor encourage the establishment of coordinators to prevent ELET in each institution as well as the development of action plans to prevent ELET;</li> <li>in the French Community of Belgium, in the <i>Expairs</i> project, institutions were supported to develop school-level projects to valorise VET pathways by improving students' motivation, reorganising educational activities to make them more relevant, and by improving students' orientation. The main aim was to support school-level innovation in this area.</li> </ul>
<p>Attraction of the labour market</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provide young people with a vision of their future beyond the qualification: offer positive role models;</li> <li>remuneration of apprentices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>in France, those who have been early leavers and enrol in the new chance schools (specific model of second chance schools) sign traineeship agreements with the training institutions and receive an allowance to compensate for their work contribution;</li> <li>in most countries analysed apprentices receive a remuneration;</li> <li>in the UK, the retention rate for apprenticeships is higher than that for some other forms of work-based learning where students are not paid.</li> </ul>


Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews. Icons created by Freepik from [www.flaticon.com](http://www.flaticon.com)






## 4.2. Critical success features

Choosing the right mix of activities for the target group concerned is crucial to the success of any measure. Multiple factors are associated with early leaving from education and training (ELET) (for an in-depth analysis see Volume I; Cedefop, 2016, Chapter 5). The reasons why young people exit education and training before achieving a qualification can be found within the education system itself but in the young person’s environment. Measures to tackle early leaving need to react to the underlying causes of disengagement as well as its negative consequences. Given that the reasons why young people drop out are not uniform, the solutions also need to differ. Those that are effective for the highly disengaged and demotivated target groups tend to be complex and resource extensive. Therefore, these types of measures have to be focused on those who need them most and who would not change their trajectories of disengagement through ‘lighter’ measures. In contrast, some young people at risk of early leaving only need relatively ‘light-touch’ adjustments and advice to remotivate them and to find a track that suits them.

Previous research has identified several profiles of early leavers or those at risk of early leaving. These vary from cases where the young person faces major difficulties (often independent of the education context) to cases where the reasons for dropping out are less severe and the level of disengagement is also less (Section 5.1 of Volume I; Cedefop, 2016). This section presents the key features of effective measures to tackle ELET relating to six profiles identified using the narratives that interviewees provided about what leads young people to disengage (Tables 20 and 21). These profiles have the purpose of illustrating how different risk factors can interact and lead to early leaving.

Table 20. **Six profiles of early leavers and learners at risk of early leaving**

<p>Learners escaping the system</p> 	<p>These young people often show limited interest in education activities which they do not perceive as meaningful for them. In many cases, their parents are also not active in following their education and do not encourage and motivate them to succeed. They are often average or below average performers in academic subjects. Their disengagement is reflected in high levels of absenteeism.</p> <p>They have low education aspirations and often they have no or little career vision for themselves. The education environment is something they endure but they do not positively associate with it. They did not actively choose the programme in which they are enrolled but were advised to follow it.</p> <p>These young people are often in a grey zone: they could drop out but they could also stay in education depending on other contextual developments. They drop out when there is an opportunity of a job, when they face a challenge such as a transition to a new environment and a new learning context, or when the support they need or try to turn to is simply not there or they do not know where to find it.</p>
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<p>Learners confronting the system</p> 	<p>These are young people who have high levels of absenteeism and who, though still formally in education and training, are already strongly disengaged. Over the years, they have accumulated gaps across skills and academic areas. Their education performance is subsequently rather poor. In some cases, this may be linked to non-diagnosed learning difficulties. They have negative attitudes towards education and training which may result in conflictual behaviours. They fail to find education and training meaningful.</p>
<p>Learners disengaging due to difficulties adapting after transition</p> 	<p>These young people are at risk of dropping out during transition from one type of education/training to another. They have high rate of absenteeism. The reality of the training does not match their expectations and they are undecided about their future orientation. Thus, they do not have a positive attitude towards the new programme and they do not mix with the rest of the group. Often, they do not have the right habits and social competence to engage successfully in the training programme. They are frequently enrolled in a programme of which they have only partial understanding. Their choice of programme was passive and is not a reflection of a profound aspiration.</p>
<p>Learners disengaging because they cannot find a placement of their choice</p> 	<p>These are young people who qualify as early leavers because they did not manage to secure a training place. They can be young people who did not find an apprenticeship placement or who did not find a training programme corresponding to their choice. They did not disengage from education/training but ended up being left behind due to mismatch in their expectations and the availability of training places.</p> <p>This category also covers those young people who did not actively drop out of education/training but who failed the final examination and therefore did not qualify.</p> <p>These are often young people who are in a grey zone between early leavers and regular students. They may not be radically different from those who secure a training place or who pass examinations successfully. Usually, they are slightly weaker students, prone to stress or less capable of presenting themselves in a manner which will secure them an apprenticeship position or other form of training.</p>
<p>Learners who had to leave ET because of caring, parenting or working obligations</p> 	<p>These are young people who left education and training because they had obligations which were not compatible with full-time study, such as parenting responsibilities, need to earn an income or need to take care of other family members. Their education performance prior to dropping out used to be average but it is not the main reason why they disengaged. Though they decided to drop out of education under constraints, in many cases, they had rather low aspirations.</p>
<p>Learners combining multiple disadvantages, possibly facing health and psycho-social issues</p> 	<p>These are young people who already left education and training prematurely and who did so after a progressive period of disengagement which resulted in a profound break-up from the education system. They ended up leaving education and training for a variety of reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lack of motivation to continue learning and generally low appreciation of the value of learning. This can be linked to insufficient parental engagement and the importance they attribute to education and training;</li> <li>• previous educational failures, stigmatisation as 'bad student' and related low self-esteem;</li> <li>• marginalisation in the school environment and in the classroom. They may have been victims of bullying, disregarded by their teachers or excluded from school for behavioural issues;</li> <li>• lack of longer-term perspective for themselves, disillusion with what education can offer them and absence of meaning in past schooling activities.</li> </ul>

Source: Cedefop. Icons created by Freepik from <http://www.flaticon.com/>

In many cases, the young people at risk of abandoning education and training also face several non-educational challenges which further worsen their disengagement. These can be issues such as mental health and wellbeing problems, drug or alcohol use, unstable family context, poverty, conflict with the law or parenting responsibilities.

Also, some young people with learning difficulties and disabilities often end up in this group, due to lack of prompt support and accumulation of education failures.

For many of these young people, school is often just one more obstacle to overcome rather than a route to a more promising future.

The borders between these profiles are blurred; they combine several characteristics:

- (a) level of (dis)engagement of the young person;
- (b) non-education challenges the person is facing;
- (c) prior educational achievement;
- (d) experience of education and self-perception as a learner;
- (e) stage of learner education and training pathway.

This last is understood as whether they are still engaged in education/training or have already dropped out. This characteristic is not intrinsic to the individual and his/her context.

Not all learners who combine the characteristics of the marginalised or obliged profile have already dropped out from education or training. However, in most cases, measures targeting specifically these profiles are designed as intervention or compensation measures. Young people who correspond to the profile of escapist or non-conformist may evolve into one of the other categories as their circumstances change and their engagement in education and training worsens. That is why the profiles and the measures targeting these profiles have been grouped under the categories of prevention, intervention and compensation and reflected in the structure of this section. However, such categorisation is never clear cut. Many prevention activities also have aspects of intervention and many compensation measures are also, to a certain extent, intervention measures. The distinction is usually quite clear between prevention and compensation, even though some measures analysed provided both forms of support.

Table 21. Overview of early leavers' profiles and learners at risk of ELET

	<b>Escapist</b>	<b>Non-conformist</b>	<b>Lost in transition</b>	<b>Resigned</b>	<b>Obligated</b>	<b>Marginalised</b>
Summary	Learners escaping the system	Learners confronting the system	Learners disengaging due to difficulties adapting after transition	Learners disengaging because they cannot find a placement	Learners who had to leave ET because of caring, parenting or working obligations	Learners combining multiple disadvantages, possibly facing health and psycho-social issues
Level of dis-engagement	Medium. Frequent absences but still attends education and training. Has some positive linkages with education/school.	Rather high. Frequent absences, rebellious behaviour in school, conflictual relationship with teachers and sometimes peers.	Medium. Chooses a new type of programme but this proves to be ill-adapted to his/her capacities and aspirations and/or competences; he/she progressively disengages.	Medium to high. Is left behind because his/her skills are not suitable to integrate into the type of programme s/he wants to enrol in.	Medium. Makes a decision to leave education/training because of his/her family or economic context.	High. No longer in education and training for a prolonged period of time. Shows no interest in education and training.
Non-education challenges	Low aspirations that can be linked to lack of family support and engagement. Possibly mental health issues such as depression.	Possibly complex personal, social and/or family issues. Possibly mental health issues such as depression.	Often low aspirations and low parental support, but not necessarily other major issues.	Possibly present but not necessarily severe.	Cannot afford to pursue full time education/training for reasons such as: needs an income, needs to take care of a parent, parenting responsibilities, etc.	Complex personal, social and/or family issues; possibly issues of health, mental well-being or antisocial behaviours.
Prior education achievement	Average or below average but not repeated failure.	Poor, often accumulates gaps in basic skills which prevent progress. Possibly having learning difficulties.	Average to poor. Does not have the skills needed to adapt to the new type of programme.	Poor, was not accepted in a programme or his/her choice often due to poor results.	Average	Often poor education results, gaps in basic skills.
Experience of education and self-perception as a learner	Neutral	Negative, often stigmatised as 'bad student', perceives self as not capable of learning.	Negative. The new programme does not suit his/her expectations – creates a negative attitude and low self-esteem.	Neutral or negative	Neutral	Very negative. Felt stigmatised. Low self-esteem and confidence in own learning capacity.
Stage on their pathway	Still in education and training.	Still in education and training.	Still in education and training but on the verge of leaving.	On the verge of leaving education and training.	Already dropped out.	Already dropped out for a longer period of time.

Source: Cedefop.

The study looked at whether and how the 44 measures analysed could be matched to these profiles. While the boundaries between the different profiles are blurred and different measures will apply to them, the study found that:

- (a) the preventative measures often target the escapist and non-conformist. They also try to prevent the profile 'lost in transition';
- (b) the intervention measures typically target the profiles 'lost in transition' and 'resigned';
- (c) the compensation measures focus on those who are 'resigned', 'obligated' or 'marginalised'. The measures that target the 'marginalised' profile are often quite different to those targeting the other profiles, as they offer much more comprehensive support. The measures targeting the 'resigned' and 'obligated' types are often labour-market-related measures.

Section 4.2.1 discusses the key features of prevention, intervention and compensation measures linking the six profiles identified.

#### **4.2.1. Key features of successful prevention measures**

The prevention measures to avoid young people leaving education and training prematurely have the following key features:

- (a) engage in a discussion with the young person to show interest in him/her and also to understand his/her challenges;
- (b) review the planning of education and training to ensure that young people can constantly make the link and the transfer between theory and practice, improving the perceived relevance of the more theoretical parts of training;
- (c) provide young-person-driven counselling, mentoring or coaching to help him/her develop a positive vision of his/her future which includes learning;
- (d) raise awareness among teachers about the importance of combating early leaving and their role in this context;
- (e) develop school-level commitment to prevention activities;
- (f) involve parents in discussions about their children's orientation. Make them better informed about the educational choices available and raise awareness of the importance of their commitment to their child's education pathway.

Many preventive measures target learners who correspond to the profiles of 'escapist' and 'non-conformist'. Often, relatively small changes and interventions are sufficient to make a difference for these young people and refocus them. These changes are often done within mainstream education and involve the development of interrelationships within and across schools, with parents, and in conjunction with local agencies and support services. They introduce multidisciplinary teams and measures to ensure that teachers have the resources and support they need (Table 22).

Table 22. **Key features of prevention measures**

<b>Key characteristics/activities implemented</b>	<b>Number of measures with this characteristic</b>
Accompany the young person to develop a career plan/set objectives	12
Parents' engagement	7
Whole-school approach: school-level action plan	5
Make teachers responsible and/or provide training or mentoring to teachers	6

Source: Cedefop.

Boxes 20 and 21 show the pathways of learners in these situations as reported in interviews during case study visits.

**Box 20. Learner pathway vignette: escapist**

**Participant profile: 17-year-old male, living in a disadvantaged suburban area**

He was a low performer in lower secondary education and had already repeated a grade twice due to absenteeism. The school psychologist recommended him to try a pre-vocational programme at lower secondary level. These programmes had just been introduced and he applied for the only course available in the municipality. It involved trying out three different vocational areas. Initially, he did not have a particular interest in any of them; he simply did not see himself in the mainstream programme.

During the one-year pre-vocational course, he gained interest in one of the vocational areas he tried out. His performance at school improved, although he still struggled to pass mathematics, and showed some absenteeism. After completing the programme, he decided to enrol in a two-year upper secondary VET programme in the same school in the vocational area he had been most interested in.

He has completed the first year of the upper secondary VET programme. During that year, his absenteeism was lower than in the previous year. The student's aspirations grew. He now plans to enrol in the second year of the programme and is even considering continuing to a higher VET programme after that.

When asked about what made the difference in this programme, the student insisted on the strong relationship with the group tutor, who is also the teacher of the vocational area, and with the other students in the group. He explained that the teacher helped connecting theory and practice. The teacher also supported him throughout the school years. Despite initial disagreements, they ended up by adapting to each other, and building up a relationship based on trust. The support of his parents and the sharing of experiences with other students in the group were also important. Finding a vocational area that he liked was a clear motivating factor.

Source: Interview during case study visit.

**Box 21. Learner pathway vignette: non-conformist**

**Participant profile: 15-year-old male, living in a relatively deprived area of a large city**

When completing the lower secondary cycle, he was in one of the lower streamed classes. He had not been getting on very well at school and found some of the lessons challenging, especially when there was a lot of reading to do; as a result, his behaviour and attendance was in decline. His school was located in a relatively deprived area of a large city and a high proportion of students leave the school without an upper secondary leaving certificate.

One of the teachers at the school approached him and suggested that he might be suited to the pre-vocational programme for the upper secondary rather than the mainstream programme, which is more academic. The teacher explained that the programme involved a mix of academic and vocational curriculum and was intended to prepare students for the transition from school to adult and working life.

At first, he was not sure about this option because the programme had a reputation as being for students that were not as bright as others. He was worried that employers would not hire him if his school certificate was attained through this programme. But the teacher persuaded him that this was the best option because otherwise he might not succeed at all in the more academic programme. He was also attracted by the modular system of assessment and the chance to have work experience in an engineering company, as this was what he hoped to do for work afterwards.

Eventually, he enjoyed his studies on the pre-vocational programme, especially the different style of teaching, group work and opportunity to do more practical work. This built on his preference for learning by doing rather than learning by listening. He also got on well with others in his class. He felt much more positive about learning and his self-esteem increased when he saw the results of his modules over the two years and could work at his own pace.

Following his graduation from the programme, he decided to do further study. While he could not go into university from his programme, he did a complementary course which gives access to higher VET. He also has a job offer from a local engineering company who are looking for someone with practical know-how and some work experience. He is really pleased that he took the option for the pre-vocational programme when he was 15 years old; he has friends that were in his class and who took the mainstream programme but dropped out because they could not keep up with the work.

*Source:* Interview during case study visit.

Three types of activity frequently found in effective prevention measures are discussed below.



#### 4.2.1.1. *Counselling, coaching or mentoring: objectives and plans*

Developing a positive future outlook which embraces further learning is a key first step for demotivated young people. The counselling methodology itself is a motivational tool <sup>(14)</sup>. It proceeds by questioning the young person about his/her future, encouraging him/her to take responsibility for his/her development and act upon the aspirations formulated.

The one-to-one contact that the young person gets is also seen as beneficial. The fact that s/he develops a trusted relationship is in itself motivating. The lack of personal relationship between the learner and the teacher in a previous educational experience is often one of the issues that led to disengagement.

Further, the counsellor is a neutral person who can intervene in case of misunderstandings or conflicts between the learner and the education and training institution, or the employer in case of apprenticeships. That is why in many cases the counsellors are not the teachers or trainers directly.

For these measures to succeed, it is crucial that:

- (a) counsellors are trained to work with young people facing difficulties; often they are youth workers;
- (b) there is a medium-term perspective and the young people keep in touch with one single counsellor. The continuity enables development of a personal relationship. However, it is not uncommon that the counsellors work on temporary contracts and are themselves in a relatively precarious situation, which results in high turnover.

The German *VerA* (prevention of training dropout) connects apprentices at risk of dropping out (mentees) with senior experts (mentors) on a one-to-one basis. These senior experts are senior citizens, retirees who volunteer to pass on their experience and help young people in trouble. The structure can help to focus on the specific problems of the mentee. The problems worked on by the pair may include professional questions linked to the apprenticeship or the school work, studying for exams, or working on personal issues such as motivation, self-assurance, or family-related or financial problems. The pairings last between a few months up to many years throughout the apprenticeship, depending on the demand and motivation of the mentor and the mentee. As a rule, mentors take part in two-day introductory courses organised by the regional coordinators. Biannual meetings with other mentors are also organised, where experiences and challenges are elaborated on and ideas are exchanged.

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<sup>(14)</sup> For example Wells et al., 2014; Cryer and Atkinson, 2015.

The youth coaching scheme in Austria adopts a case management approach, where one coach is responsible for the entire coaching process of a given learner. This includes vocational orientation, transfer to other measures, organisation of internships, analysis of strengths and weaknesses, cooperation with other initiatives and institutions (such as the PES, youth welfare), and inclusion of the family and social environment. Coaching providers are companies, NGOs and social enterprises, selected by the federal agency for social matters, and people with disabilities through a regional call for proposals.

#### 4.2.1.2. *Parental involvement: encouraging and raising aspirations*

Several studies showed that parental involvement in children's and adolescents' education is correlated with the probability of staying in education (e.g. De Witte and Rogge, 2013; Blondal and Adalbjarnardottir, 2009). There are several theories explaining why parental involvement matters for child and adolescent educational success (for an overview see Tekin, 2011). Measures to prevent ELET have learned from these theories and actions developed. Parents can be more or less involved in their children's education depending on whether they know that their engagement makes a difference to the child's future, and this is influenced by their experiences with school in the past (Avvisati et al., 2010). Outreach activities to bridge the gap between school and parents involve parents so they are better informed about the school system and the pathway of the young person, to encourage them to show interest in their child's progress and challenges, and to emphasise the need to avoid absenteeism (e.g. Paris School of Economics, 2010).

Measures that encourage parental involvement in school governance, teacher/parent relationships, and parents as resource to the school and to each other are effective with learners at risk of dropping out, provided that the young person is not in a conflict with his/her family. Parental involvement works in those situations where the relationship within the family remains good.

The initiative *Medical advice for sick-reported students* in the Netherlands systematically involves parents. The aim of this initiative is to reduce absenteeism for medical reasons by identifying biological, psychological and social factors by youth health care physicians and defining an action plan. Absenteeism for medical reasons is an important signal of psycho-social difficulties. Evaluation of the initiative showed that absenteeism reduced significantly, three months and also one year after the intervention (from 8.5 days to 5.7 and then 4.9) <sup>(15)</sup>.

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<sup>(15)</sup> Results provided by an interviewee [unpublished].

In the youth coaching scheme in Austria, parents receive information through leaflets and information events and can participate in a first meeting with the coach. Also, in the case of young adults who are not in education or training, parents are invited to contact the coaching provider or the regional coordination office. However, learners participate voluntarily and do not need an approval by their parents.

#### 4.2.1.3. *Whole-school approach and initiatives increasing teacher responsibility*

Early leaving is too often considered as a problem of the learner, with research into individual causes of disengagement. But the individual responsibility is only one part of the story. Grade repetition and exclusion of students from schools are sometimes mechanisms through which education and training institutions remove the challenge of non-motivated students. There are other factors linked to education institutions which influence early leaving (class climate, stigmatisation by teachers) (e.g. Blaya, 2010).

This has driven the European Union's ET 2020 working group on schools policy to call for a whole-school approach to tackling early school leaving (European Commission, 2015b). As explained by this group, this 'means that the objective of eliminating dropout and encouraging school success for all should be promoted consistently and systematically across all those dimensions of school life which may have an impact on educational achievement. In a 'whole-school approach', all members of the school community (school leaders, middle management, teaching and non-teaching staff, learners, parents and families) feel responsible and play an active role in tackling educational disadvantage and preventing dropout' (European Commission, 2015b, p. 8).

Several initiatives reviewed focused on putting in place school-level action plans or raising teachers' awareness of the problem of early leaving. The action plans can cover a variety of activities such as:

- (a) centrally monitoring absenteeism and identifying students at risk;
- (b) offering support to those at risk through counselling, change of track, individualised planning;
- (c) being accountable for activities carried out;
- (d) teacher training and continuous support to teachers.

The challenges for measures which require schools to put in place such action plans are:

- (a) deep understanding and acceptance of the role of the action plan to avoid it becoming a purely formal exercise;
- (b) frequent over-reliance on the enthusiasm of one individual who leads the initiative;

- (c) relationship between those in charge of the action plan and teachers who are associated with high levels of dropping out. Even within VET institutions, the rates of early leaving often differ between types of programme, professions and sometimes classes. This can depend on the type of population the programme attracts or the teacher's relationship with the group. In the latter case, mobilising underperforming teachers is often a major challenge.

In the French Community of Belgium, schools were invited to develop action plans focusing on one or more of three key issues: student motivation, student orientation and school-organisation (such as changing routines). This approach was initially introduced under the project *Expairs* but it was subsequently mainstreamed via a ministry circular (*Direction générale de l'enseignement obligatoire*, 2014). This whole-school approach is also present in the reform of the VET systems focused on certification per units (CPU)<sup>(16)</sup>. Training is structured by units which are acquired progressively. If a student fails an assessment for a unit, the school has to put in place remedial measures to bring him or her to the required level of competence.

School-level responsibility is also emphasised in the plan to fight ELET in France (French Ministry of Education, 2014). The VET schools visited during this assignment have all clearly identified a person (head of school or his/her deputy) who is in charge of coordinating actions to prevent early leaving.

#### **4.2.2. Key features of successful intervention measures**

The identified intervention measures put in place for young people at risk of early leaving include:

- (a) organisation of early remedial support to avoid them accumulating wide competence gaps compared to the curriculum;
- (b) possibilities for young people to try several professions to have a more concrete idea of the fit between personal profile and the work;
- (c) clarify aspirations and develop a positive learning project for oneself;
- (d) acquire the basic routines needed to integrate into a programme and succeed, including work-readiness to enrol in apprenticeships;
- (e) provide psycho-pedagogical support to help develop effective strategies to deal with learning difficulties and adjust the training programme and assessment requirements accordingly;

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<sup>(16)</sup> Certification per units, <http://www.cpu.cfwb.be/>

- (f) motivation and engagement measures to develop positive attitude to education and training; work-based learning and other forms of practice-based training can be included;
- (g) identify health and well-being challenges and support the young person in overcoming these, including, if needed, by adjusting the education programme.

Measures in this category mostly focus on young people who correspond to the profiles of learners ‘lost in transition’ and ‘resigned’ (Boxes 22 and 23). The sections below discuss the activities most frequently mentioned in measures focusing on young people in these situations.

Table 23. **Key features of intervention measures**

Key characteristics/activities implemented	Number of measures with this characteristic
Developing work readiness	10
Individualised development and learning plan	11
Help the young person to develop a career plan/set objectives	17
Flexible programme and educational arrangements	8
Work-based learning or close-to-real simulation	9
Social and communication skills; everyday routines and social contact	8
Remediation support to learners in difficulty	7

Source: Cedefop.

**Box 22. Learner pathway vignette: lost in transition**

**Participant profile: 21-year-old female, living in a disadvantaged suburban area**

She was a low performer and was struggling to finish lower secondary school. Her family had financial problems and she wanted to get a qualification as soon as possible. She then tried several lower secondary pre-vocational tracks offered by her school, but she did not like them.

The school psychologist suggested that she could try a new type of pre-vocational track (at lower secondary level) offered in a nearby school, offering trial of three different types of profession. She followed this track and found an area she was interested in.

After she finished lower secondary, she pursued a VET track in upper secondary in her chosen area. Her absenteeism decreased from lower secondary to upper secondary. She believed that the last year was the most interesting since the subjects were more closely related with the profession.

She has now completed the two-year programme and has been offered her first job: a six-month contract in the enterprise where she did her last internship.

She attributes the positive results partially to being more mature and to the strong support provided by the teacher in charge of the vocational area. However, finding an area of her interest was critical for completion. She remarked that her colleagues, who dropped out or had worse results were not interested in the field.

She appreciated the opportunity of developing work-based learning in different companies since this helped her understand the options in terms of working conditions in the sector. It was also motivating for her to participate in a local initiative where she developed activities in her training field with primary school children.

*Source:* Interview during case study visit.

#### 4.2.2.1. *Remedial training: addressing gaps before they translate into failure*

One of the key factors leading to early leaving is accumulation of academic failure. If young people miss certain key competences, this hinders them from further learning as they do not have the basis to understand and assimilate new material. Such competence gaps have the tendency to become broader unless they are tackled early. Another negative consequence of academic failure is the related stigmatisation. Young people who frequently fail in education and training, put themselves in a position where they are no longer receptive to learning. They embody the idea that they are not efficient learners, which then prevents learning.

The measures analysed put in place remedial training to address gaps. It is important to ensure that these are not perceived by the young person as further stigmatisation but as support. Such measures also require teachers/trainers to have a good, regular understanding of the young person's progress, as well as of how do they see themselves, and how they feel they are perceived.

In certain cities of France, a volunteering association (AFEV) provides long-term individualised support to disadvantaged VET students to reduce absenteeism and risk of dropping out due to low academic achievement. This support has three main aims or axes:

- (a) providing methodological help for studying general courses (such as mathematics and French);
- (b) accompanying the learner in his/her orientation and professional project;
- (c) accompanying the learner in his/her personal development to increase his/her autonomy and mobility in the city and search for adequate support services.

The volunteers are usually university students. The beneficiaries are referred to receive such remedial support directly by the VET school.

In the French Community of Belgium, reform introduced a new approach to organisation of learning and assessment. The curriculum and the assessment are based on competence-based units, with each unit assessed and certified. The

units are developed to build on each other throughout the duration of the training. The reform also brought the restriction of class-repetition. Students can no longer be required to repeat a grade. If a student fails the assessment of a unit (which is done after a few months, not only at the end of the academic year), the school and, more specifically, the teacher and/or trainer are required to put remedial measures in place.

**Box 23. Learner pathway vignette: resigned**

**Participant profile: 16-year-old male, not in employment, education or training**

He was a low performer in lower secondary school and failed the exams at the end of the cycle.

His school referred him into the remedial programme, but he did not want more studying, which he first thought the programme focused on.

He tried to get a job, but without success, because he was told that he lacks both qualification and basic skills required. His unemployment benefits were cut after several months and his family was pushing him to obtain a qualification to be able to get a job.

He finally decided to apply for the remedial programme and, given his low levels of qualifications, was accepted immediately.

According to his particular needs assessed when entering the programme, he was advised to follow personalised courses for numeracy and literacy, with the main objective to achieve the lower secondary examination. Because the courses were far from where he lived, he received support in the form of a monthly transport pass.

Every week, he spends one day in the classroom to get individualised learning support for the examination. He trains three days and a half in a company to get on-the-job skills and work experience. Half a day per week consists of guided personal learning, which means one-to-one support with learning difficulties (such as learning techniques and, concentration span). He appreciates the practical learning as well as the individualised support on examination subjects (basic literacy and numeracy).

He also likes the trips that the programme organises to visit industries, and the recent youth camp.

He meets his mentor (keyworker) every week to discuss any problems and his progress towards his objectives from the personal action plan. He trusts his mentor and appreciates his help and advice; he particularly likes that his mentor is encouraging him to continue in the programme and believes that he can succeed in the examination. This boosts his self-confidence.

He stayed in the programme for six months before taking and successfully completing the examination. With the help of a career advisor, he then enrolled in a pre-apprentice scheme for six weeks to become eligible and ready for apprenticeships.

As a next step, he hopes to get an apprenticeship (which is well remunerated in the country).

*Source:* Interview during case study visit.

#### 4.2.2.2. *Tasting measures: creating interest and aiding orientation*

Transition from lower secondary to upper secondary implies a choice of programme orientation. This choice is often not well-informed and may be seen as second or third best option by the young person himself/herself.

The role of tasting measures in this context is to give young people the opportunity to try various orientations based on their interest and their abilities.

In Luxembourg, as part of the measures organised by *Local action for youth*, short 'orientation' traineeships are organised in cooperation with secondary schools. Each of the 2 000 pupils in the final preparatory year of lower secondary education carries out two company-based traineeships of two weeks: this means approximately 3 600 to 4 000 traineeships each year. The organisation helps pupils with the administrative procedures of securing a taster traineeship, while teachers use informal networks built with local employers to support this programme <sup>(17)</sup>.

As part of the assisted VET programme (*Carpo*) in Germany students have to carry out internship arrangements, which last from two to four weeks. This programme aims to integrate young people who face difficulties entering apprenticeships because of their migration background or parenthood. As part of the measure, participants are supposed to do one or two internships at companies in fields where they are interested to start an apprenticeship. The (unpaid) internships work as a trial phase for both the apprentice and the company, who can test the apprentice and often agree to accept them as an apprentice after the internship.

#### 4.2.2.3. *Building work-readiness: habits and behaviours that enable participation*

One of the challenges young people face is that they do not manage to find an apprenticeship or internship placement. Several measures analysed integrated a component focusing on developing work-readiness. This includes building basic behaviours that enable participation in company life, such as punctuality, social skills or working in a team.

The training in production schools in Austria includes modules focusing on work readiness. These aim to organise training activities tailored to the individual situation and targets. Three types of training module are covered:

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<sup>(17)</sup> The prevention strand of *Local action for youth* (*Action local pour jeunes*, ALJ) activity which covers one-day information courses (OSNA) and 'orientation' traineeships made available to 2 000 pupils in the preparatory period of lower secondary education, was evaluated between November 2014 and October 2015 by the Agency for the Development of School Quality (*Agence pour le développement de la qualité scolaire*, *Agence-qualité*).



- (a) modules with a focus on getting involved in working processes provide support for beginners. They aim to (re-)adjust young adults to everyday routine, such as going to work regularly or having social contacts;
- (b) training modules with a focus on training working habits and values (such as being punctual, calling when not coming to work) and gaining and using practical competences;
- (c) training modules with a focus on preparing for specific vocational training, aiming to enable transfer to an apprenticeship.

In Hungary, the *Springboard* initiative includes, among other things, training to develop basic labour and career-building competences to support student career choices. A special 'bridge to employment' module was developed. At least six occupational fields were taught at each *Dobbantó* class in accordance with the interests of the students and the possibilities of the participating VET. The module put particular emphasis on workplace visits and job-shadowing, providing the students an opportunity to learn and gain experience in the specific vocations.

#### **4.2.3. Key features of successful compensation measures**

Compensation measures target young people who are already disengaged from education and training. They often target, at the same time, young people who are outside work (so not in education, employment or training). The measures in this category can be differentiated between those that have a strong labour market integration focus and those that also place strong emphasis on the education, personal development and social inclusion aspects.

Measures in this category often combined the same or similar activities as the intervention measures but they also emphasised:

- (a) training that gives access to a qualification but which is sufficiently flexible to enable the target group to attend to existing obligations or which provides an alternative source of revenue;
- (b) tailor-made training to improve basic skills;
- (c) motivational activities to help build confidence and self-efficacy;
- (d) support with non-education challenges such as health, housing, social benefits;
- (e) developing social competences to enable young people integrate into a group of students or a group of employees;
- (f) acquiring basic habits which are needed for (re-)integration into education and training and/or employment, such as punctuality, planning, learning-to-learn.

Acquiring a vocational qualification is a next step for some of the measures analysed and the immediate objective is to reengage the young person in a learning process. Therefore, some of the programmes did not directly give access to qualifications but were bridging programmes that help reengage young people and then lead them on to a qualifying training programme.

Such measures typically target young people who correspond to the ‘obligated’ or the ‘marginalised’ profile (Boxes 24 and 25).

The key features of the measures are presented in Table 24 and discussed below.

Table 24. **Key features of compensation measures**

<b>Key characteristics/activities implemented</b>	<b>Number of measures with this characteristic</b>
Accompany the young person to develop a career plan/set objectives	18
Developing work readiness	14
Work-based learning or close-to-real simulation	12
Individualised development and learning plan	15
Social and communication skills: everyday routines and social contact	9
Training to upgrade basic skills	8
Flexible programme and educational arrangements	10
Activities aimed at developing self-confidence, motivation, engagement	7
Opportunities to transit to training/apprenticeship	7
Case management/comprehensive support provided by multidisciplinary staff	6

Source: Cedefop.

#### 4.2.3.1. *Case management and multifaceted support*

These young people face multiple challenges, education being only one of them. They are disengaged and demotivated but they may also have psychosocial difficulties, housing, mental health or other difficulties. Resurrecting their interest in education and training is only one of several types of support they need and measures targeting such young people offer complex support which attempts to tackle multiple issues. A key principle of this support is case management, meaning that the professional working with the young person coordinates the different services enlisted to meet his/her individual needs. Rather than sending the young person from one type of social services to another, the case manager liaises with the services, and coordinates the requests and responses to deliver tailor-made multifaceted support.

**Box 24. Learner pathway vignette: obligated**

**Participant profile: 20-year-old female, leaving in a disadvantaged urban area**

She was a medium performer in lower secondary school and was oriented into the vocational track (school-based training) at age 16. However, she frequently missed classes and had difficulties focusing on her studies, as she had started to work part-time during evenings and week-ends to support her parents and siblings. Towards the end of the school year, she took up a full-time job, and dropped out of school.

During the next couple of years, she worked under different precarious contracts. She then realised how her lack of qualification was a major obstacle to finding a stable job, but was unsure if and how she could resume her studies due to her family's financial situation.

During a period of unemployment, she registered at the local employment service for young people. Her adviser, based on her profile and interests, suggested that she could apply to a second chance programme in a local VET school to prepare a vocational qualification in sales in two years.

What convinced her to apply to the second chance programme was the opportunity to receive a monthly grant during her studies and the good prospects for obtaining a qualification (high rates of success at final exams). She took the test and passed an interview with the school.

Her selection at the school motivated her to look for a company that could take her on as a trainee for the duration of her training. She also signed a contract with the school to formalise her commitment to attend classes and on-the-job training.

Every week, she spends two days at the company and three days at the second chance school. Compared to her previous experience in school-based VET, the combination of on-the-job experience with classes encourages her to learn and her attendance is rewarded by a monthly grant.

She also appreciates the close contact with her tutor in the company as well as the fact that the second chance school staff is very open to discussing students' personal matters.

She is still in contact with her advisor at the public employment services, who receives her quarterly school reports.

She hopes to be recruited by the company where she undertakes her traineeship when she graduates.

*Source:* Interview during case study visit.

**Box 25. Learner pathway vignette: marginalised**

**Participant profile: 18-year-old male, living in a rural town**

Like many participants on the programme, he struggled in lower secondary school. He mostly disliked the way he felt: the teachers looked down on him and spoke down to him, like they were 'better' than he was. The more he felt they did it, the more he wanted to rebel. He felt angry with the system and was frequently absent from school.

Ultimately, his studies suffered; as a result, he did not do very well in his lower secondary education exams and left school.

He came from a socially and economically disadvantaged background with a difficult home life. His family had originally moved from a deprived area in the city to this rural town.

He knew about the second chance education centre in his area because he had friends locally who had preceded him there. He knew that this option offered him a chance to continue his education while offering him some independence by providing him with a weekly allowance. His mother was also aware of the programme and interested in exploring this option with him; she attended the centre initially with him to meet the staff and learn more about the measure.

Initially, he had considered registering with the second chance education programme just to have 'something to do'. At the same time, he had been worried that he might continue to struggle in a hierarchical, institutionalised setting.

However, he immediately found the staff in the centre interested, friendly and encouraging – they talked to him like he was 'an equal', 'like a normal person' – which cemented his decision to register for the programme. He found that this mutually respectful approach of staff and students, along with activities based around the social development of participants (such as cooking lunch together with staff daily) and the opportunity to discuss personal issues with staff helped him to build his confidence socially. He believes this aspect of the programme helped to make him less angry, more confident and more respectful of others around him.

Also, he felt that the two-week work experience component completed during each year of the programme enabled him to get a feel for what it was like to work 'for real' and the importance of getting on with other people in the job.

He found the career guidance service offered by the centre staff very helpful, first, in showing him the range of education and training options that were available to him, and, second, in nurturing within him a desire to think about and discover the career that he would genuinely like to progress towards.

He found the way in which he was assessed on modules suited him more than exam-based qualifications. There was less pressure and less anxiety. He found he had performed much better in subjects that he had failed in his lower secondary school exam.

He found his attendance improved drastically in comparison with his attendance at school; motivated initially by the threat of losing a portion of his allowance for each day missed, he found that this source of motivation was soon replaced by the genuine desire to participate in the programme. He looked forward to going to classes because it was a welcoming place to be, and wanted to complete the modules successfully and attain the qualifications.

While the programme was billed as a two-year course, he was now registering for a third year. This flexibility was enabling him to complete the qualifications he wanted at his own pace and together with the centre's ethos of patient, but steady encouragement and belief in his abilities, he felt much more hopeful than previously about his future.

*Source:* Interview during case study visit.

The Portuguese second chance school of Matosinhos provides all young people with psychosocial support as well as counselling and help in aspects such as health, justice, legalisation of situation for migrants or economic resources. These activities are a core element of the support, in parallel to the education and vocation training aspects and motivational activities (arts in this case). It is the only second chance school which offers this form of comprehensive support. The school focuses on young people in difficult situations. Demand for support is higher than the number of places and so the school prioritises more complex cases, based on interviews and information provided by the referring institution. Considering the target group, the school reports high rates of attendance (between 75% and 80% during 2008-11) as well as high rates of reengagement: of 65 students in 2014-15 only three dropped out, while all the others were pursuing education and training at the end of the academic year (Day et al., 2013; Second chance school of Matosinhos, 2015).

#### 4.2.3.2. *'Joyful activities': motivation and confidence building*

Many young people in this category have 'scars' when it comes to their self-perception, in particular the idea they have of themselves as learners. After years of having been labelled as 'bad students' they have interiorised this vision of themselves. Such low self-esteem is a barrier to continuing in education and training.

Measures aimed at young people who are deeply disengaged tend to combine education or training activities with others that are not directly linked to a training programme or a qualification. Such activities have a core objective of ensuring that the individual can participate and enjoy an activity in a group and feel ownership and feel valued for his/her contribution. These activities can be artistic or sportive depending on the choice of the measure.

The *Produktionsschule* in Austria integrates regular sport activities as part of this measure, aiming to strengthen self-confidence, character formation, discipline and reduction of aggression. Sports activities are developed in cooperation with regional clubs based on diversity principles (BundesKOST, 2015). The measure is successful as it leads most young people into mainstream

education and training programme. Among the positive effects reported, the measure succeeds in strengthening the motivation of young people and improving their persistence in tackling difficulties.

The second chance school in Matosinhos in Portugal uses artistic activities for social effect on young people taking part in the measure. Art is also used as a technique to enable young people understand various life situations and to solve problems they may be facing. They are invited to act out the difficulties they face, to change roles with their peers and to arrive at solutions. The learners interviewed all emphasised the positive effect of these artistic activities on their motivation and enjoyment of school activities.

#### 4.2.3.3. *Low entry barriers and provision flexibility*

Bringing back these young people into education and training is a challenge. Many are unlikely to be willing to commit to a long programme on regular basis and some may not be capable of it. It is important that entry barriers to the measure are low; this means that they do not immediately have to sign up for a full programme but they can start piecemeal.

Young people in the *Produktionsschule* in Austria can also participate in one-day activities (workshops). It is hoped that through these short interventions young people will progressively reengage and become available and willing to take on longer training. This low barrier entry is in parallel with active outreach activities to recruit young people (open street work).

In the second chance school in Matosinhos in Portugal an open-door policy is a key principle. This means, for example, that when a learner is absent from classes s/he is not considered negatively. Instead, the learner is shown understanding and encouraged to go further. As explained by a learner interviewed for this study, in the previous school she used to be sent away from the school; here she was invited to come in and staff tried to understand why she was acting rebellious, and tried to be friends.

### 4.3. **Other critical success factors**

There are other success factors that can be seen as transversal in the sense that they often go beyond a specific measure or entity applying it. These are described in the following sections.

#### **4.3.1. Identification and recruitment of learners**

A comprehensive approach to early leaving starts with efficient identification of early leavers and those at risk of becoming so, the capacity to reach out to them,

and analysis of their needs to decide which of the existing measures are most suitable.

This process is relevant to institutional level (mostly concerning those at risk but also with early leavers who dropped out from the institution) and at local, regional and national level, where structures are often created to coordinate different actors playing a role in the field.

Identification and recruitment of an early leaver or a young person at risk of early leaving can happen in different ways:

- (a) the training provider identifies the person and offers support in-house;
- (b) the training provider identifies the person and refers him to another measure;
- (c) public employment services refer people to the measure;
- (d) social services refer people to the measure;
- (e) other entities refer people to the measure (as with juvenile courts);
- (f) centralised monitoring systems are used to identify people;
- (g) outreach activities by professionals, such as youth workers, who look for at-risk young people through street work;
- (h) the young person comes on his/her own.

The training provider is best positioned to identify a young person at risk or one who has recently dropped out. The provider is in the front line when it comes to detection of risk symptoms such as absenteeism, poor academic performance, or personal, social and/or family issues. It is also the first entity to detect if a student has dropped out of a programme. Teachers and trainers are aware of these situations and inform the institution leadership through different channels, which can be more or less systematised: from attendance registers to complex systems for the monitoring of students at risk. A more comprehensive (covering not only absenteeism but also other relevant indicators), and easy-to-use monitoring system at provider level aids identification of at-risk students.

When an at-risk learner is identified, the provider typically puts in place measures to understand better what the problem is and to address it. In the first instance, the learner is approached by a reference teacher/trainer, a counsellor or a school psychologist, and other measures can follow (including academic support). The training provider can also refer the student to another institution, for instance another provider offering different types of programme, an external guidance centre, or a social worker.

VET providers, however, are less well placed to identify and reach out to early leavers, especially those who drop out outside regular training periods. For instance, if a student completes the first year of a programme and does not enrol in the second year, it is often difficult for providers to know whether it is a case of

early leaving or whether the student might have changed to another school or training scheme.

Centralised monitoring systems with individualised information allow identification of early leavers, most significantly long-term early leavers with whom the training providers have lost contact. Such systems usually have annual information on the trajectories of the young persons through different providers and programmes, allowing identification of young people away from education and training for a year or more. Once these are identified, measures can be taken in coordination with other entities.

**Box 26. Centralised monitoring systems: examples from Luxembourg and the UK-England**

The *Youth contract* was introduced in England to support the participation in education, training and work of 16 to 24 year-olds not in education, employment or training (NEET). Implementation of this measure highlighted the need for a coordinated local response to identify, support and meet the needs of young NEETs or at risk of disengagement. Local authorities record information about the current activity of young people and their characteristics on a client caseload information system (CCIS). Therefore, local authorities know better than any other organisation what is going on in their geographic area and can help providers in developing their programme, in recruiting disengaged young people and referring them into the *Youth contract*.

In Luxembourg, regional offices of the local *Action for youth (action locale pour jeunes, ALJ)* systematically contact young people identified as early school leavers, based on the listings (*fichiers élèves*) provided monthly by the Ministry of National Education, Children and Youth. Pupils who left school without any qualification are contacted individually by the staff of the ALJ regional offices. In addition to surveying them on their current status (for monitoring purposes), ALJ staff helps early school leavers (who are willing and interested) to define a realistic and concrete professional plan and guide them in their transition back to school or into work.

*Source:* Cedefop desk research and interviews.

Public employment services and social services also have a relevant role in identifying early leavers, mostly long-term ones. Employment services have information on unemployed people with a low level of qualifications, not in education, employment or training (NEETs), and often refer them to upskilling measures. Social services and, less frequently, other entities such as juvenile courts, the police or orphanages, are most relevant when it comes to marginalised young people, with complex personal, social and/or family issues; they liaise with other institutions for more comprehensive support, not just on education and training, but also financial issues, housing problems, prevention of violence, and health issues).



**Box 27. Referral from other entities: examples from Luxembourg, Poland and Portugal**

In Luxembourg, the local *Action for youth* (ALJ) and the public employment service can refer early school leavers to 'guidance and professional initiation courses' and to 'professional initiation courses to diverse professions'.

In Poland, young people are directed to the voluntary labour corps (VLC) by the probation officers, education and psychological counsellors, local social-care services, emergency care, juvenile courts, police or orphanages.

In Portugal, social security services, the Commissions for the Protection of Children and Youth at risk, and the multidisciplinary teams of advisement to courts identify youth at risk and liaise with the second chance school to analyse the possibility of sending the young person to this school.

*Source:* Cedefop desk research and interviews.

There are also outreach activities, often run by non-government organisations that aim at identifying early leavers highly disengaged from education and training. Compared to the intervention of the social services, these activities would have a wider target group, for instance, in terms of background (not only the most marginalised) and age (not only those within the compulsory education age limits). The measures proposed would be tailored to each youth and typically involve street work: for example, a youth educator could visit the young person at his/her house or during outdoor activities with other young people. This study did not find many examples of this type of approach, allegedly due to the high level of resources that such an individualised approach requires<sup>(18)</sup>.

Young persons can also ask directly for support; this can happen from the moment they are at risk of early leaving to long after they have left education and training. However, they are often not aware of the available measures and receive this information from professionals at the VET provider or other entities, such as employment or social services. Several interviewees also mentioned that learners often arrive at the measure following the recommendation of friends or relatives who have participated<sup>(19)</sup>.

It is generally more common for learners come to the measure on their own initiative having been obliged to leave their studies in the past (perhaps due to

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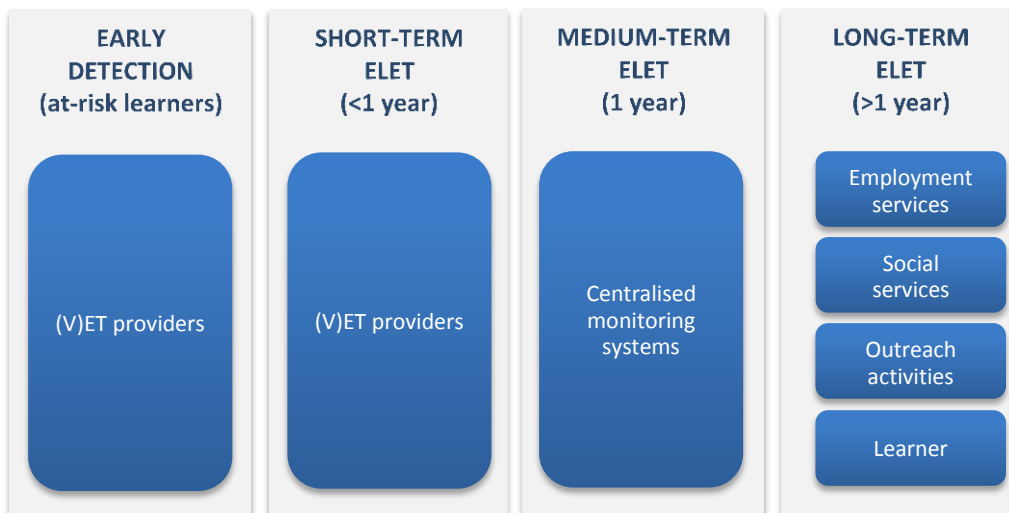
<sup>(18)</sup> An example of this type of measure would be the programme *Zero dropout* (2010-12), promoted by the Portuguese organisation Entrepreneurs for Social Inclusion. This has not been analysed in the present study.

<sup>(19)</sup> Such measures include production schools (AT), the youth coaching scheme (AT), the second chance school of Matosinhos (PT).

economic or family reasons) and want to come back to training. Young people with a strong negative perception of school are unlikely to look for support from training providers, and marginalised young people tend to distrust any support coming from public authorities. As mentioned by the interviewees on the Austrian *Coaching and counselling for apprentices and training companies*; ‘troubled apprentices rarely contact their apprenticeship office directly and file a formal application for a coaching. They lack the motivation, courage or capacity to do so. In most cases, a third person has to take the initiative and launch the process, for example teachers, trainers, guidance teachers, parents, psychological support services located at vocational schools or another confidant. Apprenticeship coaching must try to reach out to and inform this group of “third” persons, to make the measure known’ (interviewees).

Figure 2 shows the different approaches to identifying and recruiting early leavers or learners at risk of early leaving.

Figure 2. **Identify and recruit early leavers or learners at risk of ELET**



Source: Cedefop.

This overview reflects the fact that the medium-term is probably not effectively addressed in many countries due to the absence of centralised monitoring systems. Once an early leaver is identified, it is important to determine which institution or professional is best positioned to bring that person back to education and training; a training provider may be the first to detect a short-term ELET but may not have the capacity to redress the situation. Measures should aim at ensuring the provider has the right skill set to recognise early warning and act positively on it. One important aspect is knowledge of other measures and coordination with the entities providing them (Section 4.3.3).

#### **4.3.2. Developing trustful and long-term relationships with learners**

A young person with a strong negative perception of school (and teachers) is not easily brought back to education and training. Counselling, coaching or mentoring are essential and at their core is the development of a relationship based on trust between the learner and the person providing support. The development of such a relationship requires time and frequent contact with the learner. A one-off intervention is not enough, although the need for frequent exchanges can be more or less acute depending on the needs of the learner. There could also be benefits from extending the contact to after the learner has completed training.

Several measures reviewed provide frequent support to learners and are open to adapting the length of the interventions depending on their needs.

#### **Box 28. Frequent and flexible contacts with the learner: example from Austria**

Coaching and counselling for apprentices and training companies in Austria, in its pilot phase encompassed a coaching process for apprentices of maximum 41 hours. However, in the developed programme, the flexibility has increased: first, there is no limit on the number of coaching hours: the coaching process can last as long as is considered helpful by the coach and the apprentice. Second, there is active after-care following the completion of coaching: the coach contacts the young adult two to three months after completion of the coaching, to monitor the development of the apprentice and enable additional coaching if necessary. Last, the coaching process can also be started up to six months after the apprentice left the apprenticeship.

The intervention under the youth coaching scheme in Austria starts with an initial meeting with a coach, which may last up to five hours. The second step is in-depth counselling, which may last up to six months and includes up to 15 hours of coaching. There is a third step for young adults who need more intensive coaching, of up to one year and 30 hours of coaching.

*Source:* Cedefop desk research and interviews.

Learner follow-up can also be supported by monitoring systems. Coaching and counselling for apprentices and training companies (Austria) has developed an electronic monitoring system where coaches must document their observations, but also the apprentice and the apprenticeship company can (voluntarily) provide feedback on the coaching process. This is considered a positive development, as it will allow daily analysis of data and will observe outstanding developments or trends, so allowing fast counteraction, if needed.

#### **4.3.3. Coordination with other measures and resource pooling**

The entity in charge of identifying early leavers may not be sufficiently resourced to provide an adequate response. Further, the concurrence of ELET with complex

personal, social and/or family issues, asks for coordinated interventions from different professionals and institutions. This is why some of the measures reviewed involve measure coordination and resource pooling.

The clearest benefit of cooperation is that it supports learner engagement in the available measure most adjusted to his/her needs. It can also improve acceptance of the measure among the target group. For instance, if a professional who has established a good relationship with a young person (such as within a mentoring programme), refers him/her to another measure (perhaps a type of training scheme), it is more probable that the young person will feel inclined to enrol in the latter, than if recommended by someone who has sporadic contact with the learner.

**Box 29. Coordination between measures: examples from Germany and Estonia**

In Hamburg (Germany), the Youth Labour Employment Agency (*Jugendberufsagentur*, JBA) was designed as part of a project on cooperation between different service providers in youth counselling initiated by the German Public Employment Service. The JBA agency unites federal and regional public institutions dealing with vocational guidance, counselling and labour market and vocational training services for youth under one roof: public employment agency, job centres, district youth agencies and the government Agency for School and Vocational Education (*Behörde für Schule und Berufsbildung*), and its member organisation Hamburg Institute of Vocational Education and Training (*Hamburger Institut für Berufliche Bildung*).

Cooperation is promoted at different levels. JBA organises case conferences to deal with young people who have multiple difficulties and need the services of more than one actor. Participants include the young learner, in some cases his/her parents, and representatives of all relevant JBA actors. If necessary, external actors, such as representatives of health or youth organisations, may also be invited.

In Estonia, pathfinder centres have struggled to reach the early leavers target group. Young adults aged 18 to 26, who have discontinued their studies and might be unemployed, are difficult to contact with. To address this, pathfinder centres are planning to increase cooperation with youth workers.

*Source:* Cedefop desk research and interviews.

**4.3.4. Relationships between education/training providers and companies**

For education providers, building networks with companies is a basic condition to raise young people's awareness and experience of the world of work, their understanding of job demands and employer expectations. Most measures reviewed stress strong collaboration with employers as a success factor. This aims at ensuring work-based learning experiences for learners and also at

improving provider and company mutual understanding, their respective challenges and constraints in terms of time and resources.

**Box 30. Cooperation with companies: examples from France and the UK-Northern Ireland**

In France, learners in second chance schools (E2C) typically do several internships, at different companies, spending close to half of their time at companies. To make sure their learners find placements for internships, E2C pay special attention to developing and maintaining strong links with enterprises. They try to sign local or national charters or conventions; EdF and La Poste are well known partners. The *Réseau E2C France* showcases on its website some of the companies which are partners of the E2C schools <sup>(20)</sup>. Some enterprises sponsor specific actions, while others earmark the money raised through the apprenticeship tax to the E2Cs <sup>(21)</sup>.

One critical success factor is that enterprises have a clear contact point with whom to address any potential problem concerning the learner, day-to-day within the school. , Depending on the school this can be either a person dedicated to links with enterprises or the referral person for the learner in question.

Under *Training for success* (Northern Ireland), further education colleges usually work with a wide range of business and industry sectors, community and statutory agencies, resulting in high levels of economic engagement across the provision. When training suppliers engage with employers, these employers then become training partners and agree on a training plan between the training provider, employer and learner. Support officers and mentors within *Training for success* work closely with employers to understand what their needs are and match those needs with the knowledge and skills of the trainees.

*Source:* Cedefop desk research and interviews.

#### **4.3.5. Changing mindset of education and training professionals**

Several interviewees mentioned the stigmatisation of learners participating in the measures as one of the challenges to implementation. Participants in compensation measures may not easily find their way back into regular education and training, being seen as less capable than other learners, and possibly problematic as a result of marginalised backgrounds.

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<sup>(20)</sup> Network of second chance schools France. <http://www.reseau-e2c.fr/ecole-de-la-deuxieme-chance/entreprises>

<sup>(21)</sup> In France, firms pay an apprenticeship tax which is set at 0.68% of the salaries paid by the firm in the year N-1. The amounts collected from this tax are used to finance apprenticeship and E2C. Some education and training providers are allowed to receive part of the money collected through this tax directly from firms who can earmark the funds to them.

This negative image of learners participating in ELET measures is often found among professionals, families, companies and learners themselves. Since professionals have a key role in identifying learners and referring them to suitable measures, the change of mindset must start with the professionals. Some of the measures reviewed include relevant actions: they provide support to professionals in mainstream schools on how to deal with learners at risk of early leaving, including those facing personal, social or family issues, through training activities or guidance.

Promoting a culture of peer learning among teachers and other staff, but also among pupils, can be a powerful way of changing mindsets. It aids transference of pedagogical practices from measures addressing early leavers or learners at risk of dropping out, extending their benefits.

**Box 31. Changing the professional mindset: examples from the Netherlands and Portugal**

In the Netherlands, the professionals working with *Medical advice for sick-reported students* (MASS) observed that teachers were not at ease when addressing the topic of absenteeism with their learners, as it is not seen as one of their regular tasks. As a response, MASS wrote a manual for teachers to support them in having absenteeism conversations with youngsters. MASS also provides courses on absenteeism conversations for teachers.

Within the Dutch programme *Getting started*, often used for youth at risk who are in the transition from a youth detention centre back into society, the counsellor also provides teachers with guidance on how to work with these youngsters.

The staff from the second chance school of Matosinhos (Portugal) often provide training on how to work with at-risk youth to teachers from mainstream schools.

*Source:* Cedefop desk research and interviews.

**4.3.6. Political commitment and sustainable funding**

Many interviewees referred to political commitment as a key factors for success and this is linked to ensuring sustainable funding. While some measures were initiated thanks to specific funding programmes (pathways to apprenticeship in Wales and pathfinder centres in Estonia have been supported by the European Social Fund), their extension in time (and geographic expansion) depends on guaranteeing a more permanent source of funding.

This is also a requisite for continuing development and improvement of measures to tackle ELET: measures that last can be more systematically evaluated and improved based on the evaluation results.

Box 32. **Political commitment and sustainable funding: examples from Ireland and France**

Factors which contribute to the *Youthreach* programme's effectiveness include the continuing political focus on early school leaving and ways to address it, and the Irish government's continuing commitment to funding the *Youthreach* and community training centres on a nationwide scale over 30 years to provide second chance education and training opportunities for those who fail to complete secondary school and become unemployed.

The length of time the programme has been in existence has led to a stock of physical infrastructure, and growth in the social and knowledge capital over the period to create a substantial and effective system of addressing early leaving which includes approaches to teaching, administration and management of the programme.

The added value of second chance schools has been recognised by the French government (see Act 2007-297 of 5 March 2007 and its implementing Decree 2007-1756 of 13 December 2007) <sup>(22)</sup>. This political endorsement contributed to the dissemination of the E2C across France. It also opened doors for financial support, including via apprenticeship tax.

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

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<sup>(22)</sup> Network of second chance schools France, <http://www.reseau-e2c.fr/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/Textes-de-lois-1.pdf>

## CHAPTER 5.

# Policy impact: evaluating VET measures

Combating early leaving from education and training (ELET) has been relatively high on the EU and national policy agendas for over a decade. This attention to the need to bring young people to at least the level of upper secondary leaving qualifications led to the design and implementation of a multitude of measures, at local, regional, national and European level. This study identified 337 initiatives in 15 countries that had the objective of reducing early leaving through vocational education and training (VET). These measures were not all mainstreamed and some had the reduction of early leaving as one of several objectives. Nevertheless, the number can be considered as an indication that the attention paid to this issue is relatively high and there are many activities in this area. Despite the high number of measures being put in place, early leaver rates, while decreasing, remain high in some countries. The issue seems to be not so much the absence of policy efforts to tackle early leaving but the lack of effectiveness of at least some of these initiatives. In a context of multiplicity of measures, availability of evidence about what works is very important to make decisions about which initiatives should be funded, sustained and mainstreamed.

Several EU-level initiatives emphasise the need to evaluate policies in this area. The 2011 Council recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving stresses the importance of evaluations to underpin decisions (Council of the EU, 2011). The 2013 conclusions of the thematic working group on early school leaving also underline this necessity (European Commission, 2013a). More recently, the conditionalities of the European Social Fund (ESF) require countries that decide to use ESF money to fund measures to tackle early leaving to have in place an evidence-based strategic framework and a monitoring framework for ELET.

Despite these guidelines to invest in evidence-based policies, many measures initially identified by this study have not been evaluated. Of the 337 initiatives identified only few were backed by evaluations. Cedefop selected for in-depth review 44 measures which were evaluated or for which, at least, monitoring data were available <sup>(23)</sup>. The aim of this review was to assess whether

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<sup>(23)</sup> Of the 44 measures analysed, 38 have been evaluated. For only three, monitoring data were available. In one case, an evaluation was planned but was not carried out, though the measure was accompanied by research. Two of the measures were portrayed as good practices in national publications. Not all of the evaluations were



the indicators used to evaluate policies to tackle early leaving provide the right information to support policy decisions. By identifying good practices and existing gaps, the study aims to support policy-makers and evaluators in their decisions on:

- (a) what indicators should be monitored and against which indicators a measure/policy should be evaluated;
- (b) which approaches and methods to choose to be able to reach conclusions about the resulting change and how this is related to the measure or policy implementation;
- (c) how to judge programme performance.

Examples of indicators that can be useful for evaluating policies or programmes to tackle early leaving and examples of robust evaluations in this field are presented in the following sections, accompanied by discussion of methodologies.

### 5.1. Theoretical framework: what should be evaluated

The focus of this study is on policies and measures that have a common objective, to reduce ELET. Considering the European definition of what is early leaving, this means that all the interventions aim at increasing the share of young people who achieve upper secondary qualifications. The actions expect to do so by reducing the number of young people who quit education and training before being qualified at upper secondary level and/or by reintegrating early leavers into education and training and leading them to a qualification at this level.

The ultimate result expected is quite clear: increased number of young people with upper secondary qualifications. The means through which the measures aim to reach this objective vary greatly.

The prevalent evaluation practice is to assess programmes/policies based on a (programme) theory (e.g. Donaldson and Lipsey, 2006). Theory-led evaluations develop a model which explains logically how the different elements of an intervention should lead to the expected outputs, results and impacts. The programme theory explains in a narrative how putting in place a certain service/activities should change the attitudes and behaviours of people, and ultimately bring about the desired social change. A programme theory is frequently shown schematically in form of an intervention logic that illustrates

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publicly available or made available to the research team. This was the case for 31 measures.

graphically the sequence of inputs, outputs and results (European Commission, 2013b).

In the case of measures to combat early leaving, the desired change is better education attainment of young people and improved employability, as well as equity. This defines the overall objective of all the interventions analysed. The expected results correspond to this objective and should therefore be measured through an increase in the number of young people who achieve upper secondary qualifications.

The result that should ideally be assessed by evaluations of measures to tackle ELET is the change in the rate of early leavers. To observe the change, it is necessary to compare data on early leaving before the measure started (baseline) with data after the measure has been introduced.

However, there is a time lag between the point when the measures analysed intervene and when the beneficiaries are expected to complete the training programme. The prevention interventions analysed concern young people who are often still several years away from the hypothetical year of graduation. The remedial interventions reintegrate young people into education and training but it then takes time for them to complete the programmes. Evaluators often do not have the practical possibility to measure effects which occur several years after the intervention. Evaluations are frequently commissioned in a time frame which does not enable such longitudinal follow-up of young people. Therefore, it would be expected that evaluations capture intermediate outcomes, in particular:

- (a) in the case of prevention and intervention measures, the change in retention rate of young people;
- (b) in case of compensation measures, the change in the number of people who reintegrate education and training as a result of the measure.

Ideally, these changes would be measured sometime after the young person benefitted from the intervention (such as three or six months), seeking impacts of measures to address early leaving.

The programme theory should demonstrate the logic of how the inputs (the intervention itself) will lead to the desired results. This is typically done by making explicit the link between inputs, activities, outputs and results.

The European Commission guide for evaluation of socioeconomic interventions defines (European Commission, 2013b):

- (a) input as financial, human, material, organisational and regulatory means mobilised for the implementation of an intervention. Some prefer to limit this use to financial or budgetary resources. In this case, the word 'activity' can be applied to the implementation of human and organisational resources;

- (b) outputs as an indicator describing the 'physical' product of spending resources through policy interventions;
- (c) result as the specific dimension of the well-being of people that motivates policy action: what is expected to be modified by the interventions designed and implemented by a policy;
- (d) impact as the change [of result] that can be credibly attributed to an intervention. Same as 'effect' of intervention or 'contribution to change'.

The data on inputs to measures is important to understand:

- (a) the level of investment, be it financial or human resources. This is crucial information when judging the success of a given intervention. Some interventions can achieve modest results but if the inputs were also modest then the overall result can be considered a success. However, if resources invested are substantial, the results achieved should be proportionate;
- (b) information on outputs is also important to explain the results observed. If the number of persons reached through the measure is low, the results, even if positive, are also likely to be modest. On the other hand, if the measure reached a large audience but only small change in retention is observed (or only a small change in other positive results), then this can raise questions about the effectiveness of a given intervention;
- (c) the data on impact concern the change observed which would not have happened in absence of a given intervention. This can be particularly challenging to measure in the case of interventions focused on addressing early leaving because:
  - (i) there is a time difference between the moment when a person takes part in a prevention/compensation activity and his/her final graduation. In this time, many other things can happen which influence his/her decision to stay or leave education and training;
  - (ii) in many countries, there are various parallel measures to address early leaving. Therefore, it cannot be considered that those who do not take part in a given intervention have not received any support. Similarly, those who take part in a certain intervention may have received other support in the past or even in parallel. Therefore, it is possible that not all the change observed is linked to the intervention analysed. However, assessing the exact contribution would require sophisticated evaluation models which are not necessarily needed: it may be sufficient for the evaluators to recognise qualitatively the other elements of context that could be influencing the change observed.

In complex interventions, there can be several layers of results. This is the case when the activities do not directly link to the desired change but

intermediary steps need to be made first. Intermediary results are more directly linked to the outputs and lead to the ultimate results. This is the case with interventions addressing ELET.

The policies to tackle ELET and persons in charge of their implementation have little or no control over whether a young person ultimately drops out of education and training or not. This is a personal decision/reaction which is the result of complex combination of factors as discussed in Volume I. While the policies cannot directly influence the decision of the young person, they can try to influence the factors that support an individual's chances of leaving education and training prematurely. Activities aim to change factors such as attitude to education and training, learning goals, skills and competences (and education outcomes). These in turn should result in better retention in education and training that would ultimately lead to lower rates of early leaving.

The expected results of policies to address early leaving can therefore be divided between:

- (a) intermediary results: these are linked to the factors affecting early leaving and are expected to be directly influenced by the policy/intervention;
- (b) ultimate results: these are less directly influenced by the policies put in place but reflect the social change that is aimed at, that is improved education attainment.

As discussed in Volume I (Cedefop, 2016), the factors affecting early leaving are complex and interrelated. They are complex because what leads one person to leave education and training may have no effect on the decision of another person in the same or similar circumstances. There is no simple relationship between the presence or absence of a certain factor and the decision of a person to stay or to leave an education programme. Further, the factors are strongly interrelated with the environment the person is in.

Therefore, the programme theory that should underpin an evaluation of a policy to tackle early leaving is unlikely to be a simple one. Programme theories can be more or less simple depending on the problem that is to be tackled (how dependent is it on various issues) and the level of influence that a policy can have over the result. Simple programme theories can be presented as a causal relationship between the intervention and the result. For example, the introduction of, and access to, a new drug can have direct causal influence over the reduction of a certain pathology or illness. The relationship between the intervention (introduction of a new drug) and the result (decrease of pathology) can be evaluated relatively easily by measuring the results and analysing their relationship with the intervention. It is rarely the case in education policy that the relationship between the policies introduced and the expected results would be

direct and simple. Therefore, the programme theory for most education interventions, including policies to tackle ELET, does not imply simple causal relationships between a few variables (inputs and results but describes complex relationships between a fairly large number of variables. As discussed in Chapter 4, the inputs in case of interventions to tackle ELET can be coaching activities, traineeships, teacher training activities, remedial training, and many others.

The intermediate results can reflect one or several factors associated with early leaving as identified and discussed in detail in Volume I, Chapter 5 (Cedefop, 2016): more clearly defined learning goals; improved attitude and perception of education and training; and improved well-being.

Most measures analysed will combine several inputs (activities) and aim at several intermediary results.

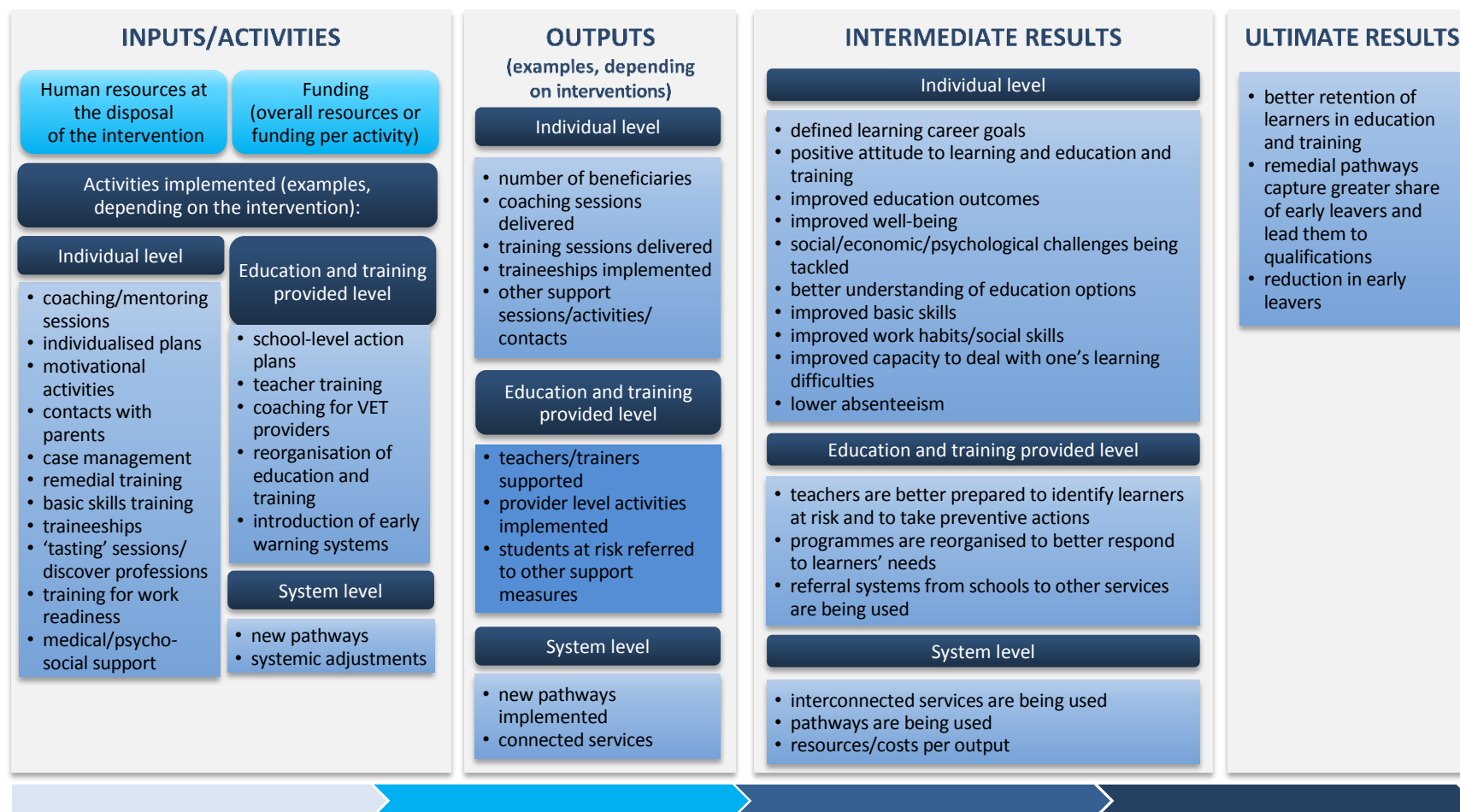
Figure 3 lists types of inputs (activities), outputs and intermediary results that can be the building blocks of intervention logics of measures to tackle early leaving. The ultimate results are common, except that prevention measures aim at retaining a greater share of young people and compensation measures aim at reintegrating a greater share of those who left before being qualified.

The figure also shows that outputs and results can be expected at different levels, depending on the nature of the intervention:

- (a) the level of individual learners, where ultimate results are also expected;
- (b) the level of teachers/trainers and education and training providers, which is crucial to ensure sustainable change and long-term positive evolution;
- (c) the system level, where measures analysed aimed to change conditions and the context to improve the situation of individual learners.

In addition to specifying expected outputs and results, a complex intervention typically has several assumptions about the conditions in which the activities are likely to lead to these results. For example, coaching and mentoring activities alone are not a guarantee of a positive result but will depend on the quality of the service provided and the quality of the staff delivering it. Further, they will not be effective for everyone as the result will depend on the profile of the beneficiary. Such assumptions are not always explicit and they are often not paid sufficient attention in evaluations. Pawson and other authors of the realist evaluation approach emphasise the importance of making these assumptions, which they call programme mechanisms, explicit. Programme mechanisms in their approach are clarifications of what it is about the programme that makes a difference and supports change (Pawson and Tilley, 2004). Clarifying and analysing not only which interventions work but also under what circumstances and for whom is crucial to enable policy learning and continuous improvement.

Figure 3. Theoretical intervention logic for a combination of measures to tackle ELET



Source: Cedefop.

This discussion provides indications of a general framework for evaluation of interventions to address early leaving. It shows that evaluations should focus on indicators covering:

- (a) ultimate results: change in rate of early leaving and more specifically:
  - (i) change in retention rates in education and training;
  - (ii) change in the share of early leavers who participate in compensation measures and complete a qualification through these measures;
- (b) intermediate results: these should capture change at individual level in relation to the factors affecting early leaving, such as:
  - (i) attitudes to education and training and personal education goals;
  - (ii) education and training outcomes: levels of skills and competences;
  - (iii) health and well-being, as well as social, economic or psychological challenges;
  - (iv) work-readiness.

It should also capture change at provider level.

#### **5.1.1. Examples of intervention logics**

The text below shows three examples of how elements of the above framework could be combined into an intervention logic for a selected type of activity. The examples use concrete cases of measures analysed in this study. They discuss which indicators were used in the evaluations carried out and also which other indicators could have been used. Many aspects of an intervention can be evaluated but the focus will vary depending on the way the evaluation will be used by the organisation which commissions the evaluation report. Some evaluations are more concerned with improving the implementation process and therefore focus more strongly on the activities put in place and how these could be improved (formative evaluations). Others are more focused on the results achieved (summative evaluations).

The examples begin with a description of the aims of the initiative as this is the basis for development of evaluative indicators.

##### *5.1.1.1. Example 1: capacity building of schools, including teacher training*

This example shows the intervention logic of a policy/measure that focuses on building-up school-level capacity to tackle early leaving, as with the Danish example of the *Retention caravan* analysed as part of this study. The evaluation did not explicitly follow a theory-based approach to evaluation, however elements of an intervention logic are apparent from the way the indicators used were defined (Danish Ministry of Education, 2012). The text below shows which

indicators were used in the evaluation carried out as well as those that could have been used to improve understanding of ultimate impact.

### **Description of the intervention**

The *Retention caravan* aims to support the retention of VET students from ethnic minorities, particularly boys. More specifically, the objectives, as formulated in the documentation about this programme, are:

- (a) to increase young people's motivation for choosing VET or a basic VET course, and to give them an understanding of the value of a VET education, as well as career opportunities in Danish society;
- (b) to increase the retention of young people who have started VET. The quantitative target at the participating schools was to improve the retention rate by 20% by the end of the project period;
- (c) to support the governmental target that 85% of a youth cohort should complete upper secondary education by 2010, and 95% of a youth cohort should complete upper secondary education by 2015;
- (d) to support the labour market needs for an educated workforce.

The initiatives targeted individual schools and their problems, with a view to:

- (a) support the VET institutions and the teachers in developing ways to tackle ELVET among ethnic minorities, such as through training of the teachers;
- (b) engage parents in their children's education, such as through teachers visiting the VET students' homes;
- (c) develop tools that could motivate VET students from ethnic minorities and make them feel welcome and wanted at the schools and in the future labour market, such as through specific mentor programmes and intensive guidance programmes (Danish Ministry of Education, 2012).

The activities implemented include:

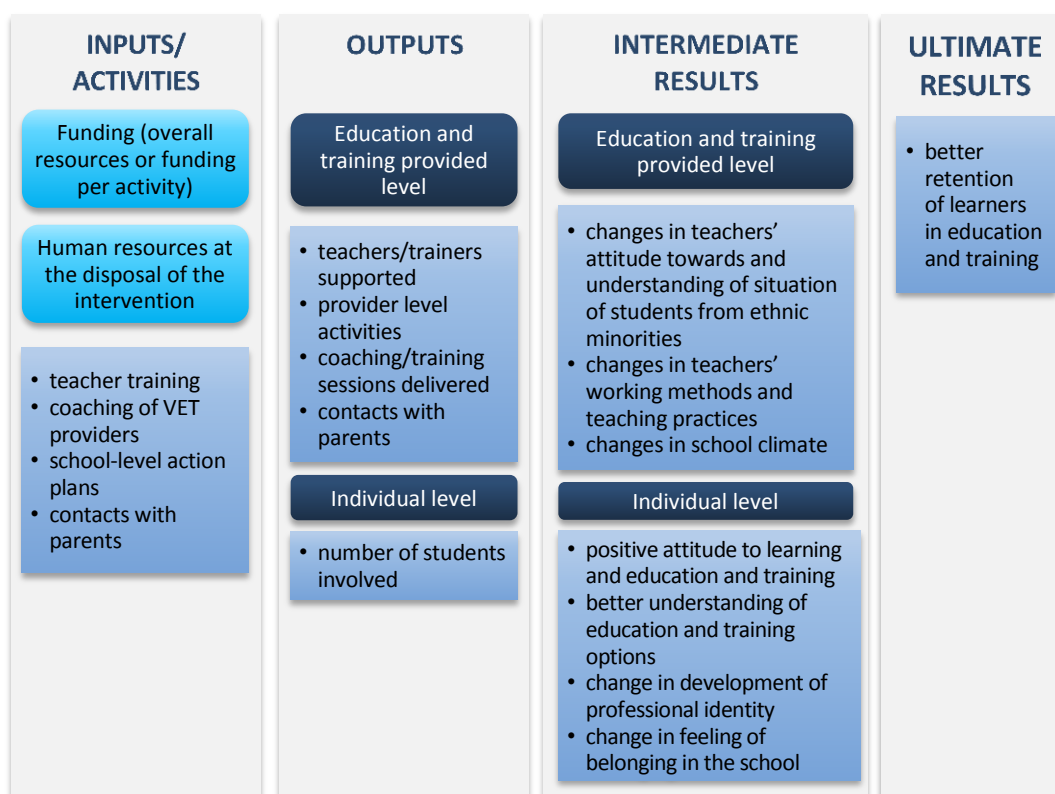
- (a) setting up a 'retention coordinator' function at VET institutions;
- (b) skills development of VET teachers aimed at developing teaching methods based on the individual students' strengths, skills and possibilities;
- (c) developing more contact with parents;
- (d) use of educational counsellors to support dialogue and contact with parents;
- (e) setting up local groups of role models;
- (f) developing study environments such as homework cafes, a form of out-of-school support to help young people to complete their homework;
- (g) developing networks to support implementation of best practices (Danish Ministry of Education, 2012, p. 5).



The *Retention caravan* put in place a team of experts who accompanied schools in the design and implementation of school-level activities.

An overview of the intervention logic for this programme is presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4. **Intervention logic: *Retention caravan***



Source: Cedefop.

### Indicators on inputs

The 2012 evaluation of this initiative did not analyse the inputs. The following indicators could have been used to understand the scale of resources needed to achieve the reported results:

- overall financial resources mobilised as well as resources per school supported or per type of activity implemented;
- the human resources put in place: number of persons/experts engaged in supporting schools and the extent to which they were mobilised full-time or part-time;
- number of activities carried out by the experts advising the schools, numbers of contacts between the experts and the schools, number of contacts with families.

### **Indicators on outputs**

The 2012 evaluation monitored the following outputs:

- (a) number of schools taking part in the intervention;
- (b) number of students involved;
- (c) number of teachers involved;
- (d) number of parents involved;
- (e) number of courses/sessions delivered in schools.

The following additional output indicators could have been used:

- (a) number of counsellors involved;
- (b) the number of sessions delivered could have been broken down by type of session;
- (c) number and type of materials developed.

### **Indicators on intermediate results**

The 2012 evaluation monitored the following intermediate results:

- (a) change in teachers' understanding of how to work with young people at risk of early leaving (qualitative feedback);
- (b) change in teachers' teaching practice/methods (qualitative feedback);
- (c) change in teachers' capacity to interact with students from various backgrounds (qualitative feedback);
- (d) the nature of the relationship between teachers and mentors (qualitative feedback);
- (e) young persons' development of professional identity (qualitative feedback);
- (f) change in young persons' self-confidence;

The following additional indicators could have been used in light of the activities put in place and the objectives of the intervention:

- (a) change in parents' attitude to and understanding of their children's education pathways;
- (b) change in young persons' feeling of belonging;
- (c) change in school climate;
- (d) change in young persons' aspirations.

### **Indicators on ultimate results**

The 2012 evaluation analysed the change in retention rate, comparing the retention of students of Danish and non-Danish origin. It compared the results with a control group of schools that did not take part in the *Retention caravan*.

The indicator on retention captures well the expected ultimate results of the programme. The collection of data on students of Danish and non-Danish origin

is a proxy that helps assess whether the main aim was attained: supporting the retention of VET students from ethnic minorities.

#### 5.1.1.2. *Example 2: coaching and mentoring young people*

This example discusses the possible elements of an intervention logic focused on the young person by providing a combination of remedial training and vocational guidance. This was the case in the activities of the French association AFEV (*Association de la fondation étudiante pour la ville*). The AFEV activities to prevent early leaving from VET received funding for social experimentation which had to be accompanied by rigorous evaluation; the latter was carried out in 2012 (Bavoux and Pugin, 2012).

#### **Description of the intervention**

AFEV is specialised in providing individualised support to children and teenagers living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and potentially at risk of dropping out. About two hours of individualised support per week are provided by volunteers (around 7 000 university students per year) in 43 areas in France across different cities. Their input is often broader than just school support. They act within the family and try to support parents – often disorientated with school matters/school language – to follow their childrens' education and to legitimise their role alongside the school.

The support has three main aims:

- (a) providing methodological help for studying general courses (such as mathematics, French);
- (b) accompany learner orientation and professional goals;
- (c) accompany learner personal development to increase autonomy and mobility, such as search for adequate support services (social services, health services, sport services, cultural services).

Various activities support the three specified aims:

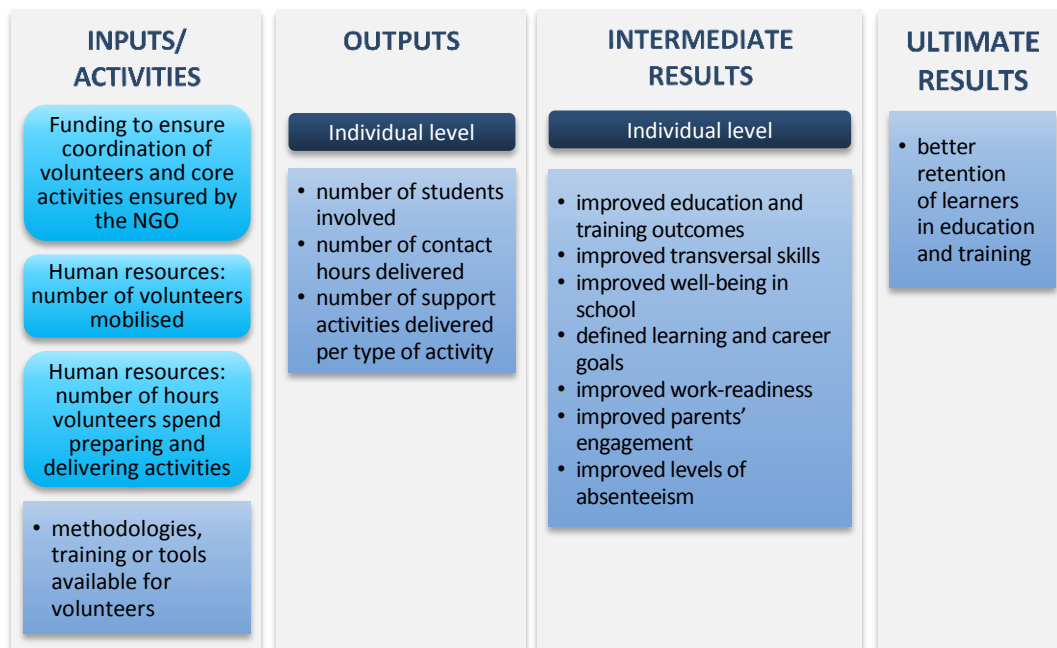
- (a) providing methodological help in studying general courses: updating learners' skills in general courses, helping the learner to do his/her homework, using ICTs for pedagogical purposes and for searching for VET opportunities, improving relationship at schools with teachers and other learners;
- (b) accompany learner orientation and professional goals: improving the image of the VET track chosen, providing the learner with professional guidance, helping him/her to find an traineeship/write a CV, informing the family about VET tracks;

- (c) accompany learner personal development to increase autonomy and mobility: help the search for adequate support services (social services, health services, sport services, cultural services), encouraging learners discover new places/services (such as youth information centres, public libraries) and cultural activities that he/she would not usually attend/do (theatre, reading activities, museums, cinema).

The AFEV also organises activities within the VET school, for example CV writing workshops, cultural and sport activities, organisation of school festivities, and building a ‘wall of expression’ in which young people can express themselves with regards to their problems at schools. There is a permanent presence in school of a volunteer (under the national volunteer scheme: *service civique*) who helps develop activities with the school/teachers in collaboration with the local AFEV coordinator.

An overview of the intervention logic for this initiative is presented in Figure 5.

Figure 5. **Intervention logic: activities of the French association AFEV**



Source: Cedefop.

### Indicators on inputs

The evaluation did not discuss input indicators such as the financial or human resources mobilised.

The following indicators could have been used:

- (a) the number of volunteers intervening;
- (b) the number of hours a volunteer invests in the activities;
- (c) the funding AFEV received to organise the activities of volunteers and implement the project.

### **Indicators on outputs**

The evaluation provided data on the numbers of beneficiaries reached by the activities.

Other indicators that could have been used to provide data on outputs are:

- (a) number of hours the volunteer students spent with the beneficiaries;
- (b) the number of activities implemented per type of activity.

### **Indicators on intermediary results**

The evaluation provides data on the following intermediary results:

- (a) change in education outcomes in general education subjects;
- (b) changing in learning to learn capacity;
- (c) change in digital competence;
- (d) change in well-being at school (active participation in courses, boredom, understanding what the professor explains, anxiety, attitude towards going to school);
- (e) change in one's positive vision of his/her future and understanding of professional possibilities;
- (f) change in parents' attitudes on training of their children;
- (g) change in students' capacity to seek traineeships and in their work-readiness;
- (h) change in absenteeism;
- (i) change in use of other places in the town which provide resources for one's development, such as libraries;
- (j) change in civic attitude.

Other indicators could be identified but the above list is comprehensive, already covering all objectives of the intervention.

### **Indicators on ultimate results**

The evaluation did not cover the extent to which the beneficiaries ultimately achieved an upper secondary qualification. The duration of the evaluation did not enable such longitudinal measurement.

5.1.1.3. *Example 3: second chance education and training*

The intervention logic of an initiative that offers second chance education and training to those young people who have already disengaged from education and training can be seen in the *Youthreach* initiative in Ireland. This initiative was evaluated in 2010 and the indicators used in that evaluation are discussed below (Department of Education and Skills, 2010). The 2010 evaluation focused on the process of delivering *Youthreach* programmes and on the management of its centres. It was not a fully fledged evaluation of effectiveness but included an evaluation of some results.

**Description of the intervention**

*Youthreach* offers a way in which young people and adults may return to, or complete, their education in a non-threatening learner-centred environment. It targets at 15 to 20 year-olds who are unemployed, who left education and training before completing either lower or upper secondary education. It provides them with opportunities to acquire a qualification.

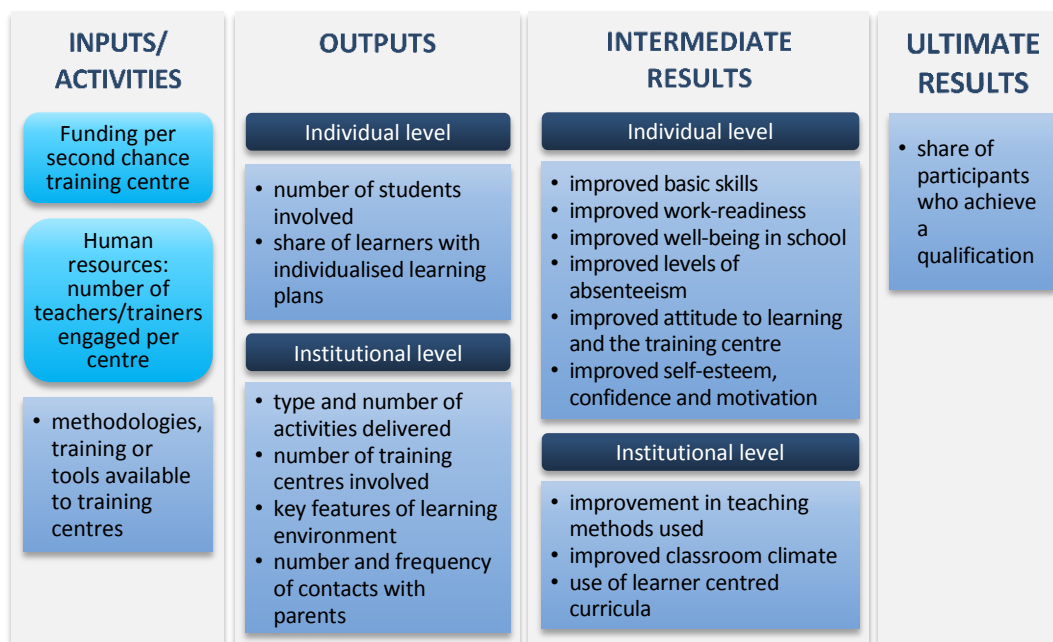
*Youthreach* centres are responsible for developing programmes and courses to meet the needs of their particular learner group, locally. The curriculum includes three main elements: general education, vocational training and work experience. The specific curriculum content varies depending on the qualification for which the learner is being prepared.

The national guidelines drafted in 2010 specify a four-phase plan for learners:

- (a) in the induction phase, student needs are identified and a suitable learner plan is devised;
- (b) in the foundation phase, the emphasis is on developing personal and social skills and on skills development generally via accredited modules;
- (c) the progression phase emphasises employability skills and work experience and leads to a vocational qualification;
- (d) there is also a transition phase to help learners progress onwards from the centres.

Figure 6 gives an overview of the intervention logic and the indicators used.

Figure 6. Intervention logic: *Youthreach* initiative



Source: Cedefop.

### Indicators on inputs

The evaluation did not discuss input indicators, such as:

- numbers of teachers/trainers mobilised in *Youthreach* centres;
- financial resources available per *Youthreach* centre;
- other resources available to the training centres such as guidelines, methodologies, and training.

The evaluation looked at many other indicators that relate to the management of *Youthreach* centres, such as, existence of a management board, relationship with the vocational education committee, practices for staff management, and presence of policies or codes of practice. These indicators relate to quality assurance processes rather than to the actual outcomes of the intervention.

### Indicators on outputs

The evaluation collected information on:

- number of training centres that use the national methodology and how is it put in place;
- number of learners benefiting from the intervention and their background;
- share of learners with individualised learning plans;
- key features of the learning environment and of the teaching approach;

(e) level of parental involvement.

Other indicators could have been identified but the above list is comprehensive, already covering all objectives of the intervention.

### **Indicators on intermediate results**

The evaluation reported the following indicators that could be considered as capturing the intermediate results:

- (a) the extent to which the curriculum is learner-centred;
- (b) the extent to which the training centre uses collaborative planning methods for design of and implementation of training;
- (c) nature of teaching methods used and their frequency;
- (d) classroom atmosphere;
- (e) learners' feeling of belonging in the training centre;
- (f) learners' positive attitude to the training centre;
- (g) change in learners' self-esteem, self-confidence and motivation;
- (h) change in rate of absenteeism;
- (i) improvement in basic skills.

### **Indicators on ultimate results**

The evaluation reported findings regarding these ultimate result indicators:

- (a) the share of students who achieve a qualification;
- (b) the share of students who progress to further education and training;
- (c) the share of students in employment.

The first indicator adequately reflects the aim of *Youthreach*: to provide early leavers with opportunities to acquire a qualification. Evaluation also looked into the pathways of students after leaving the measure, helping assess if the attainment of a qualification ultimately led to increased opportunities in terms of employment or education and training. This is particularly relevant to a measure targeting the unemployed.

#### **5.1.2. Developing intervention logics**

The key issues to bear in mind when developing an intervention logic that could be used for evaluation is to <sup>(24)</sup>:

- (a) develop the programme theory and the intervention logic based on a good understanding of what the intervention aims to achieve and how;

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<sup>(24)</sup> For more information see the resources under 'Define what is to be evaluated' in *Better evaluation*: <http://betterevaluation.org/plan/define>



- (b) identify objectives that are clearly formulated; often the objectives of interventions are articulated in a general manner. As interventions are evaluated against their objectives, it is important to ensure that:
  - (i) the objectives can be achieved through a given intervention (for example, a small local project will only have local results and this should be recognised in the way the objectives are phrased);
  - (ii) the objectives are formulated in a way that makes it possible to identify how a given intervention contributes to the outcomes; the chain of effects between the activities implemented and the expected results must not be too long or the possibility that other activities have a strong effect on the result observed increases;
- (c) define objectives that can be the basis for developing indicators, qualitative or quantitative. The results should not be formulated narrowly, focusing only on what should be measured, as this could limit the potential of the evaluation to find unexpected results;
- (d) making explicit the whole chain of inputs, outputs and results (possibly with different layers of results). Having information on results alone does not explain why a change is happening and whether it has anything to do with the intervention.

### **5.1.3. Analysing results and judgements**

An important feature of evaluations is that they judge how a given intervention performed. They should not only report results but they should also enable to judge whether the results are 'good enough'. In particular, they should consider whether:

- (a) the results respond to the objectives and the targets defined;
- (b) they are proportionate to the resources spent;
- (c) the same or better results could have been achieved via a different, less costly activity;
- (d) the results are different from the situation before or without the intervention.

Judging the effectiveness of an intervention requires comparing the results observed with a framework that supports the ultimate judgement about performance. The framework can consider the targets set for the intervention (assessing whether the targets have been achieved); the costs per output or per result compared with other interventions; and comparison of results achieved with other interventions or a situation where there is no intervention (baseline or a control group).

The indicators that support the judgement may capture change or evolution (and this can be positive or negative) but they can also reflect an absolute

statement about a certain feature of the intervention. For example, an evaluation can conclude that students who undertook guidance sessions had a better idea of possible education and training options than those who did not attend such sessions (control group comparison), or before attending such sessions (baseline comparison), or those taking part in a similar process (comparison with another intervention). In such cases the success of a measure is based on comparison. An evaluation can also conclude that the fact that all students are offered guidance is a success. In this case, the judgement is not being made based on the results achieved but rather because of presence of certain systemic features which are expected to yield positive outcomes. In some cases, it is not possible to collect data on results and therefore judgements need to be formulated based on presence or absence of facilitating features.

To carry out a counter-factual evaluation is resource-extensive and requires a more substantial evaluation budget. Depending on how the evaluation findings are expected to be used, it is not always worth the cost of carrying out counter-factual evaluation that would enable a comparison with a control group or a different intervention. Further, baseline data are not always available when the evaluator is asked to carry out the evaluation as it was not collected at the beginning of the intervention. In such cases, evaluators can design judgement criteria based on the objectives of the intervention and decide, from stakeholder discussions, what would be considered as poor, good or excellent performance before the actual data are collected. In any case, it is important to decide how the judgement will be made before the evaluation is actually carried out as, otherwise, there is a risk that judgement criteria will be tweaked to make the intervention appear good.

## 5.2. What is being evaluated?

This section discusses the indicators which were measured as part of these evaluations. It focuses on the quantitative components of evaluations. Most evaluations also gathered qualitative feedback which focused on aspects, such as:

- (a) qualitative illustration of results also monitored quantitatively;
- (b) identification of additional or different results;
- (c) explanation of results captured quantitatively and how the measure led to such results;
- (d) feedback related to the process of implementation.

The use of qualitative information was varied and is not discussed here in greater depth.

#### **5.2.1. Main evaluation focus**

Most evaluations of measures analysed tended to report individual level outcomes. Information about change at the level of education and training providers was rarely reported.

Many of the evaluations analysed focused on the situation of young people when exiting a given intervention: the number who completed the support programme, whether they went into another form of training, and whether they integrated into employment.

This is a positive aspect as it shows that most of the evaluations went beyond simple output data about numbers of beneficiaries and looked at what happened to young people after they received the support. Twenty-seven of the evaluations analysed looked at whether young people stayed in education and training after the intervention. Other evaluations looked at whether they transitioned to 'regular' education and training programmes. For example, in the Luxembourg second chance school, of the 150 students in upper secondary education, 59 continue their further studies in 2012 and another 48 took up mainstream education.

However, only 15 of the evaluations looked at whether young people eventually qualified and therefore whether they escaped the 'fate' of becoming an early leaver. For example:

- (a) in the UK, the percentage of those who achieved a qualification for *Skills for work* doubled from 30% in 2008/9 to 60% in 2013/14;
- (b) in Norway, the pilot project evaluation of the certificate of practice from 2011 showed promising results, with 41 of 51 students completing the certificate of practice (two-year programme) (80%). This is higher than the retention rate of students with similar profiles in standard programmes (67% dropout);
- (c) in France, since the launch of the second chance schools, the average success rate of pupils at the vocational baccalaureate exam has exceeded 90%, with some variations from year to year. This is higher than the success rate in the mainstream programme.

Less commonly, evaluations looked at how the interventions affected the factors leading to early leaving, the intermediary outcomes. When such outcomes were measured, the indicators selected often reflected only few of the factors identified in the general programme theory above.

In some cases, the evaluations looked at the effect of the intervention on young people's education aspirations/goals and their professional orientation. This was the case:

- (a) in the evaluation of the German vocational orientation programme (*Berufsorientierungsprogramm*, BOP) where young people were asked to report on their understanding of professions suitable for them as a result of the orientation process; 80% of students stated that they knew which professions were not suitable for them at all and more than 60% stated that they knew which professions were suitable for them;
- (b) in Austria, data from the *Production school* analysed show that, at the beginning of their participation, only 14% of young adults had a concrete and realistic picture of their career aspirations. At the end of their participation, this increased to 50%. For 50%, career plans became more realistic and more concrete, for 40% they remained the same and for 9% they got worse;
- (c) also in Austria, about 76% of participants in the youth coaching programme said that the coaching helped them to develop a better perception of their future and 71% said that they are more aware of their skills and strengths. 57% of learners say that their perspective on their future profession has improved;
- (d) in Hungary, teachers of students who took part in the *Springboard* programme were asked whether they considered the students' choice of profession appropriate: 78% stated the choice was appropriate.
- (e) participants in the *Production school* programme in Austria improved their work readiness: at the beginning, 20% of students were able to fulfil their working duties while at the end the figure was 35%. The numbers of those who wanted to give up when difficulties occurred decreased from 46% to 42%. Better motivation to fulfil working tasks was seen for 32% of participants, the motivation stayed at the same level for 56%;
- (f) employers who trained learners in the Welsh programme pathways to apprenticeships were asked whether, allowing for their age and experience, their learners had limitations in terms of work readiness and work-related characteristics: 32 out of the 67 employers said they had none.

Some of the evaluations captured the effect on absenteeism and punctuality which are frequently cited as symptoms of disengagement from education and training:

- (a) the introduction of medical advice for students who were often absent for medical purposes in the Netherlands resulted in a reduction in level of absenteeism from 8.5 days in 12 school weeks before the advice was

received to 5.7 days three months after the support, and to 4.9 days 12 months after the support;

- (b) attendance in the second chance school analysed in Portugal was 80%, which is considered as high for a given target group.

One of the evaluations looked at level of absenteeism but saw no difference compared to the control group – this was the case of the French initiative of student association AFEV.

Improved education performance and levels of skills are another aspect measured by some of the evaluations:

- (a) between 6% and 20% of participants in the youth coaching scheme in Austria has seen an improvement in basic skills (numeracy/literacy) and sometimes also soft skills (communication). This is based on data reported by the coaches;
- (b) under the German scheme *VerA* (prevention of training dropout) 80% of participants who had difficulties in education performance stated that the mentoring help them with their results;
- (c) 86% of students who took part in the Hungarian programme *Springboard* considered that the acquired knowledge was useful for their future life.

Some of the evaluations looked at the attitude towards studying and education:

- (a) 90% of respondents from the *VerA* programme in Germany state that the mentoring has increased their inclination to study;
- (b) also in Germany, two thirds of participants in the *Carpo* programme stated that they had almost given up on the idea of an apprenticeship and were only motivated to try once again to start an apprenticeship training because of the offer of assisted apprenticeship through *Carpo*;
- (c) 30% of students who took part in the German vocational orientation programme (BOP) claim to be more motivated at school after participating in the programme.

Some of the evaluations looked at aspects such as motivation and confidence:

- (a) 70% of mentees who took part in the German *VerA* programme state that without their mentor, they would not have made it through this difficult time;
- (b) in the Austrian youth coaching scheme, improvement in overall motivation was reported by 33% of participants and self-confidence by 31% of participants.

An overview of the main results reported per intervention is presented in the annex.

### 5.2.2. The evidence used

The evaluations reviewed uses two sources of data: surveys and administrative data.

The survey data mainly concerned factual statements about one's situation and perceptions of how participation in a programme contributed to change learners' situation (skills, work readiness, etc.).

The perceptions were either self-reported or reported by teachers/trainers/mentors. While self-reported data are usually relatively easy and not very costly to collect, it also has limitations: it relies on respondents' honesty, capacity to introspect, understanding of the question asked. It is also prone to response bias depending on how the question is formulated. However, self-reported data are a common source of evidence in evaluations and is often the only practically feasible way to collect data on certain types of effects.

The administrative data were used as basis to populate indicators about participation, programme completion, absences and participant background.

None of the evaluations reviewed used actual administrative data on education performance of students.

### 5.2.3. Analysing data according to target groups

Breaking down data according to gender or other characteristics of the target group is one way of seeing whether certain groups benefit more from the programme than others. Most evaluations reviewed had data breakdowns per gender (18 evaluations).

Other breakdowns were sometimes, but much less frequently available:

- (a) education pathways or prior education attainment (19);
- (b) migration (seven cases);
- (c) age (nine);
- (d) socioeconomic background (10).
- (e) company size (one).

While participation is often broken down by these categories, the results are rarely discussed or distinguished according to these categories. Exceptions are:

- (a) the evaluation of Austrian supra-company apprenticeships found that those participants with good level of competences have the best chances to complete the supra-company training and find a regular apprenticeship training placement. However, those with learning difficulties, but also those with migrant background or older apprentices, have more difficulties and are more at risk of dropping out from this scheme;
- (b) in Denmark, the final evaluation of the *Retention caravan* concluded that the initiatives had a positive impact on the retention rate of VET students from

- ethnic minorities as well as on the retention of disadvantaged Danish VET students;
- (c) evaluation of the Danish youth guidance centres showed that the academically weakest students attach more importance to the development of an educational logbook than the academically stronger students: 56% of the academically weakest students thought that guidance had some or a big impact on their career plans in the transition into upper secondary education, while only 25% of the strongest students responded in this way. Students living in homes with another main language than Danish also attached more importance to the educational logbook than students from homes with Danish as the main language.

#### **5.2.4. Assessing change and impact**

Evaluations make a judgement on the contribution of a given programme or policy. They should also determine that any change observed is not due to something that is independent of the programme (demography, economic changes, another programme).

Few evaluations reviewed made a clear reference to the baseline situation before the programme was introduced. However, the baseline situation of the participants in the measure is often implicit and reflected in the programme design. For example, the persons were either at risk of early leaving or they were already outside education and training. So the measures that looked at change in outcomes at individual level compared with the starting situation of the participant, even though this was not explicit. That, however, does not allow assessment of the regional or school-level evolution of the rate of early leaving.

The second issue is to understand whether the change is due to the intervention. This can be assessed through experimental or quasi-experimental techniques, though such techniques are difficult to put in place in social policy and their use in this context is contested by some. For instance, randomly allocating some learners to a support measure, while not giving support to another group of learners, can be considered ethically questionable.

None of the evaluations reviewed had an experimental design where participants with the same characteristics would be allocated to a control group at random. Several of the measures had a quasi-experimental design using some form of control group (group that did not participate in the programme). A comparison with a control group is made in the evaluation of the Hungarian *Springboard* initiative, the Danish *Retention caravan* and the French experimentation of student association AFEV. Comparing the results of the group of learners who were exposed to the programme with the group that were not

exposed to the programme suggests a causal link between the programme and the results observed.

The contribution of the programme can also be assessed based on statements made by beneficiaries who observed the link. This can be done by asking them how the programme contributed to different types of results. This approach is the one found in most of the evaluations that used participant surveys as main data.

### 5.3. Conditions for policy mainstreaming and learning

The issue of policy and programme evaluations is germane to the question of mainstreaming and policy learning. Once evidence is available about the success of a given intervention, the question arises of whether this intervention could be mainstreamed within the given country and also possibly transferred internationally and under what conditions.

The question of policy transfer across countries is broadly debated (e.g. Stone, 2001) and sometimes criticised for not being culturally sensitive and context-specific (e.g. Bridges, 2014). Nevertheless, countries have been and are looking at other countries' education policies and transfer, after remodelling, practices from abroad. Such transfer can be more or less successful depending on a range of issues discussed below. Some of the examples analysed in this study have been inspired by measures in other countries, as with the production schools in Austria which were based on the Danish model of production schools.

The issue of mainstreaming projects and local initiatives to national programmes and policies is also a challenge. Many small-scale examples demonstrate positive outcomes but are never mainstreamed. In other cases, small-scale examples are mainstreamed with important variations in results. The text below discusses the conditions for mainstreaming and transferability of approaches to tackling ELET within and across countries.

#### 5.3.1. Conditions for mainstreaming measures within the country

Mainstreaming or upscaling a certain approach within a country implies that:

- (a) the approach is successful and there is convincing evidence of its success;
- (b) the transfer will introduce a change in the way education and training is provided or supported.

Several models have been developed to analyse change in education, among the most influential being those of Rogers, Fullan and Ely. These and others have been analysed by Ellsworth (2000). The main characteristics of these three models are briefly described below.



5.3.1.1. *Rogers model of diffusion of innovations*

Rogers analyses innovation in education as a process of communication. The key building blocks of this theory are the:

- (a) 'change agents' who are persons between the change agency (i.e. the organisation that 'commands' the change) and the organisation and persons who are to adopt change;
- (b) 'communication channels' which are used by the change agent to reach to and convince the target group by communicating and diffusing innovation. The channels can be media or interpersonal contacts.

Rogers sees change agents as the key mechanism for change. They are seen almost as 'manipulating' the adopters while the adopters have a somewhat secondary role. He sees the role of change agents in several stages: develop a need for change; establish an information-exchange relationship; diagnose problems; create the intent in the client to change; translate this intent to action; stabilise adoption and prevent discontinuance; and achieve a 'terminal relationship' in which the organisation or people adopting the change develop the ability to be their own change agents <sup>(25)</sup>.

5.3.1.2. *Fullan's model of education change*

Compared to Rogers, Fullan's model is not based on a one-to-one relationship between the change agent and the adopter. He sees change as a process in which multiple persons and organisations act as change agents. His work analysed in greater depth the factors that influence change, with the following key stages in the process of change and the related actors:

- (a) initiation: there several factors that matter at the stage of the initiation, such as the availability of innovations and awareness of these but also the pressure or advocacy from the government or interest groups;
- (b) implementation: some of the factors that matter for implementation are linked to the change itself (how complex is it, how urgent is the need for the change), others to the local context (such as the positions and attitudes of headmasters or the municipality) and also the broader context (particularly government policy);
- (c) continuation: this is the face of institutionalisation; it is dependent on formalisation, take up by key persons, existence of procedures;

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<sup>(25)</sup> Based on Penn State personal web server. Rogers' diffusion of innovations. <http://www.personal.psu.edu/wxh139/Rogers.htm>

- (d) outcome: the purpose of the change is achieving successful outcomes (the change itself is a means).

Fullan analyses change as a dynamic process which is not a linear and is influenced by a range of aspects. He suggests that those working on stimulating change in education need to pay attention to the trade-offs between issues such as planning and uncertainty or centralisation versus decentralisation <sup>(26)</sup>.

#### 5.3.1.3. *Ely's conditions of change*

Ely looks further into the process of change implementation and adoption by analysing the conditions of change. Successful implementation and adoption of change is not dependent solely on the characteristics of the innovation. He identified the following eight conditions for change:

- (a) dissatisfaction with the status quo (the adopters must feel the need to change);
- (b) sufficient knowledge and skills (this concerns both the knowledge to understand the innovation and also that to put it in practice);
- (c) availability of resources (not just financial but also human);
- (d) availability of time (knowledge is not sufficient people need to gain a deep understanding of the innovation, which takes time);
- (e) reward or incentives (encouragement);
- (f) participation and ownership of the innovation;
- (g) commitment from the leadership;
- (h) leadership offering support as well as inspiration.

Based on these models, the following conditions for transferability have been identified in the measures analysed:

- (a) leadership and commitment over time;
- (b) evidence on success factors;
- (c) the role of change agents;
- (d) the role of the communities of practice;
- (e) autonomy supported by guidelines and other tools <sup>(27)</sup>.

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<sup>(26)</sup> Based on Penn State personal web server. Fullan's educational change.  
<http://www.personal.psu.edu/wxh139/Fullan.htm>

<sup>(27)</sup> Based on Penn State personal web server. Ely's conditions of change.  
<http://www.personal.psu.edu/wxh139/Ely.htm>

#### 5.3.1.4. *Leadership and commitment over time*

Some of the measures analysed, though not all, have been successfully scaled up to national or regional level. When upscaling happened, this was often possible because of the high level commitment from policy-makers. Leadership at all levels of an intervention is crucial to introduce sustainable changes, particularly if these are to bring in important change to the previous practice.

Several of the measures analysed built on pilot projects that first tested the approach, its feasibility and the extent to which it yielded positive results. Once evaluation of pilots was positive, the measures were scaled up to the national level: this was the case for nearly half of the measures analysed. Examples include:

- (a) the vocational orientation programme (*Berufsorientierungsprogramm*) in Germany started as a pilot project in 2008 and was mainstreamed following evaluation in 2010. Since then, the programme has reached 815 000 pupils and created partnerships with 3 275 schools. Today, the project is part of the *Educational chains* initiative which accompanies youngsters from school through vocational training to their first job);
- (b) the *Local action for youth* programme was launched by the Luxembourgish Ministry of Education in 1984 as a pilot project and extended to the whole country in 1988. Today, its large network of field offices provides comprehensive guidance, training and personal support to young people to help them enter the labour market;
- (c) in Ireland, the Ballymun youth guarantee pilot was tested in the period 2013-14. It was then subsequently mainstreamed into to the national model for youth guarantees;
- (d) in France, the first second chance school (E2C) opened in 1997, as part of an EU pilot project, in the city of Marseille. Other pioneer E2C soon followed (in 2000 in Mulhouse, in 2002 in Champagne-Ardenne and Seine-Saint Denis). Today, E2C operate at 107 sites in 18 regions across France. The number of young people supported increased from 1 000 in 2003 to 15 000 in 2015.

Policy leadership and continuity is not only about mainstreaming pilot experiences. Longer-term commitment to the issue and to the mainstreamed solutions is needed for initiatives to get over the project phase to become programmes and/or core features of a system to support young people in difficulties.




The study also analysed examples of local initiatives that were developed without particular top-up support. While these were successful, in many cases they did not manage to inject a dynamic of scaling up and transfer on their own,

without political support. Securing such commitment in early stages of a project is important for its sustainability and future use of results.

Stability of the measures is also important for the successful transfer and large scale implementation. Several of those analysed have been in place for over a decade: the drive to reduce dropout rates in the Netherlands has existed since 2007; the supra-company apprenticeships in Austria were created in the 1990s; the *Youthreach* programme in Ireland was created in 1989).

The expert workshop organised as part of this study <sup>(28)</sup> concluded that it takes time for local innovative initiatives to be evaluated, scaled up and eventually turned into larger programmes or policies supporting young people at risk. Long-term support secures the commitment of staff working on the ground and allows them to develop their working methods as they gather experience.

Table 25. **Tips for ensuring leadership and commitment over time**

	Integrate elements of successful practice into national strategies
	Secure government commitment to scale up results of experimentations and pilots
	Make regional authorities accountable for delivering activities to address ELET

NB: Icons created by Freepik from [www.flaticon.com](http://www.flaticon.com)

Source: Expert workshop results.

#### 5.3.1.5. *Evidence on success factors*

Evidence of what works is essential to enabling learning and transfer within the education system (OECD, 2009). Evidence is crucial to informing policies, putting in place funding arrangements, and helping build necessary capacities. Cedefop has identified some successful measures which relied on comprehensive monitoring and documentation of activities.

In France, one of the challenges in the fight against early leaving was the number of measures coexisting locally with little or no connection between them. The solution was a new monitoring system of early leavers comprising regional platforms responsible for following and supporting young people who left general education or VET without a qualification. These platforms not only allow the authorities to coordinate measures regionally and make sure they complement each other; they also offer an opportunity to exchange experiences. The

<sup>(28)</sup> <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/events/evaluating-impact-and-success-vet-policies-tackle-early-leaving-education>

monitoring activities proved pivotal both in raising awareness of the problems linked to early leaving and in mobilising all actors.

The French monitoring system is not limited to VET but is a comprehensive system requiring interministerial and interinstitutional collaboration and compatible mechanisms to collect data across the country. This broad basis captures data on early leaving from VET and enables policy-makers and practitioners to track learners' trajectories and to understand which type of education they have left.

In the Netherlands, the provision of reliable data from the monitoring system BRON (basic records database of education) helped in the process of getting ELET/ELVET on the agenda at schools and municipalities. Offering reliable data to VET schools and municipalities was essential to enable them to manage ELVET. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science has worked closely with BRON to create reliable ELET/ELVET data. The goal, to have reliable figures for ELET/ELVET, was to help schools and municipalities to identify with the figures and understand how these figures were created. The main goal was to serve as a 'management tool' for schools.

Table 26. **Tips for developing evidence on success factors**

	Carry out evaluations to provide evidence of success and meta-evaluations of several good practices to identify key factors in view of mainstreaming
	Provide time for evaluations to ensure that they can capture intermediary and ultimate results, not only short-term outputs
	Reflect the voices of teachers and trainers and take their knowledge and experience into account in policy-level evaluations

NB: Icons created by Freepik from [www.flaticon.com](http://www.flaticon.com)

Source: Expert workshop results.

#### 5.3.1.6. *Change agents*

In the examples analysed, change agents have the capacity to introduce change locally in education and training institutions. An equivalent function to change agents can be identified in several of the measures analysed:

- (a) the coaches in the Austrian apprenticeship coaching programme can be seen as change agents: they do not only train and guide young people but also provide support to companies who are struggling to retain apprentices at risk of early leaving, actively engaged in conflict resolution;
- (b) the coordinators in the Danish *Retention caravan*, an initiative set up by the Ministry of Education to attract and retain ethnic minority youth in vocational




training programmes, acted as change agents, both guiding and coaching the young people and supporting VET providers to use motivational pedagogies. The pivotal importance of these coordinators is illustrated by the fact that their function, established as part of the project which finished in 2012, has been continued since;

- (c) in the French context of regional networks to tackle early leaving, the networks themselves can be seen as change agents. The activities of networks create momentum to support learning from good practice locally;
- (d) in the Netherlands, the drive to reduce dropout requires local and regional authorities to develop action plans to reduce early leaving. However, there is also support offered by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science which deploys account five managers <sup>(29)</sup> tasked with closing the gap between the policy frameworks of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the 39 regions in the Netherlands (schools and municipalities). The account managers went to schools and municipalities to discuss their specific ELET issues. The outcome of these conversations served as input for continuously improving policy.

The change agents support education and training providers in their transition to a different approach to teaching, organising education and training or retaining young people.

The expert workshop organised in 2015 as part of this study confirmed that the use of change agents is a good strategy to support transfer of innovative and successful practices (Table 27).

Table 27. **The role of change agents**

	Act as a network of experts who can support capacity building of schools based on good practice
	Provide training to education and training institutions and their leadership
	Get the support of headmasters, leaders of education and training centres, social partners, employers and other actors concerned to support adoption of good practice

NB: Icons created by [Freepik](http://www.flaticon.com) from [www.flaticon.com](http://www.flaticon.com)

Source: Expert workshop results.

<sup>(29)</sup> Along with a budget for municipalities and (VET) schools.





### 5.3.1.7. *Communities of practice*

Supporting peer learning and exchange of successful practices among professionals helps a group of actors to reach a common understanding of what works, a prerequisite for mainstreaming any project or measure. Good examples from those analysed are:

- (a) the project *Expairs* in the French Community of Belgium from 2012 to 2014 helped 42 schools to focus their teaching on learners' needs and to design measures to motivate them. The schools were divided into three thematic clusters where best practices were shared, documented and transferred with the help of the project experts;
- (b) QuABB counsellors in Hesse/Germany are encouraged to exchange experiences and to work with a wide range of stakeholders, by participating in regular regional and state meetings and workshops. The project specifically aids exchange between practitioners (guidance counsellors and counselling teachers), who regularly meet at local and state level.

Several ways to support the development of communities of practice were highlighted during the expert workshop (Table 28).

Table 28. **The role of communities of practice**

	Share knowledge about what works via publicly available user-friendly databases Increase visibility of good practices, for example through awards
	Promote peer-learning Promote sharing between organisations
	Promote study visits, info days, conferences, and other events such as an annual 'week for the prevention of ELET'
	Establish networks/associations for a community of practice

NB: Icons created by [Freepik](http://www.flaticon.com) from [www.flaticon.com](http://www.flaticon.com)

Source: Expert workshop results.

### 5.3.1.8. *Autonomy supported by guidelines and other tools*

One of the challenges when transferring good practices is how to contextualise successful activity. This is why policy-makers have been giving increasing leeway to education and training providers and other stakeholders (such as social partners, employment and community services, NGOs) to develop their own approach, based on existing guidelines, methods and advice. In turn, they are expected to comply with specific reporting requirements, ensuring that best practices can be captured and made available to others. In the following

examples, the education and training providers and stakeholders were given quite a lot of autonomy to design specific activities to reduce early leaving:

- (a) the Dutch strategy to reduce dropout rates does not prescribe any specific activities except that all regions, municipalities and education and training providers need to put measures in place to address ELET;
- (b) the French regional networks which coordinate activities to support prevention and compensation measures are also not given specific definition of activities to put in place. They are required to work in a network and coordinate but the exact activities and how they work with those at risk or those who have already dropped out are left to their discretion.

In several activities analysed, the providers of education and training and stakeholders implementing the activity need to comply with certain guidelines or frameworks. These are expected to capture the enabling features of activities to tackle ELET which lead to successful results:

- (a) the Irish *Youthreach* centres need to follow a quality framework developed specifically for this type of provision;
- (b) the Estonian pathfinder centres follow the guidelines, indicators and annual goals set by the Ministry of Education. Within this overall framework, they enjoy a large degree of autonomy;
- (c) in Denmark, youth guidance centres were recently reformed with more emphasis on quality assurance. They work autonomously but are required to publish objectives, methods, planned activities and expected performance on their websites. In support, the Ministry of Education has published a handbook helping them develop a quality assurance system;
- (d) the French E2C need to adopt a charter of fundamental principles governing their work following a relevant audit. This charter defines the key features of E2C (support by local/regional authorities, objective of social inclusion, cooperation with companies, focus on skills). Compliance with the charter is necessary for the award of a quality label.

### **5.3.2. Transferability of measures across countries**

Transnational policy learning happens but there are challenges to overcome. The socioeconomic context is different from one country to another, and so are the roles of employers and employment services, of social partners and guidance and counselling services, of parents, teachers and learners. These differences may be crucial to the success or failure of a measure tackling early leaving.

Governance frameworks also vary. The existence of institutions offering second chance provisions, the sharing of responsibilities between ministries, guidance provision and monitoring, and the degree of autonomy of education and



training providers will influence whether a certain policy or practice can be adopted in a given country.

This study analysed examples inspired by practices from other countries, showing that, despite limitations, policy learning in this area is already happening:

- (a) both the production schools in German-speaking countries and the Matosinhos second chance school in Portugal are inspired by the Danish factory schools. While the Danish factory schools are part of the regular education system, Germany and Austria have not integrated them as such. Nevertheless, the production schools have been operating successfully in both countries and are interlinked with other education options and pathways. The Matosinhos second chance school is an independent school run by an NGO in partnership with a local authority (city council of Matosinhos) and the Ministry of Education. The school is requested by the Ministry to deliver official training programmes;
- (b) the study analysed activities of several second chance schools/models for second chance schools (in France, Luxembourg and Portugal) which are part of a European network. These schools put in place very similar working principles and are influenced through the networking offered via this European platform.

Independent of the above constraints on direct transfer (replication) of practices to tackle early leaving, there is much that can be learned and borrowed transnationally. This study identified several key features of effective practices, most of which are relatively independent of context (Chapter 4). These key features could be used as principles to develop measures and refine practices to tackle early leaving in other countries.

## CHAPTER 6.

# Conclusions and policy messages

### 6.1. Strengthening VET policy commitment to combat ELET

Vocational education and training (VET) is particularly exposed to early leaving. To reduce high rates of early leaving in VET (ELVET), important prevention efforts are needed to increase the quality, accessibility and attractiveness of VET.

At the same time, VET is part of the solution to the problem of early leaving from education and training (ELET). The study showed that VET programmes (particularly those more practical and oriented to work-based learning) can be effective in motivating young people who are discouraged and disengaged. This is why measures to counteract ELET can benefit from incorporating those vocational pedagogies that make learning more meaningful for certain young people.

However, this positive role of VET in addressing ELET is not sufficiently recognised in EU reference documents. The 2011 Council recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving recognises that VET is particularly concerned by the phenomenon of early leaving. It calls for countries to have strategies that cover both general education and VET. However, the recommendation does not identify the importance of VET as a solution to this phenomenon and the positive potential for vocational pedagogies to reengage young people.

The recent 2015 Council conclusions promote a whole-school approach to reducing early leaving. While this approach is applicable to general education and school-based VET, it does not tackle issues faced by apprenticeships. The study found that in several countries where data are available (including France, the Netherlands and Austria), early leaving from apprenticeships is not negligible. Further, the 2015 Council conclusions mention VET only marginally and without emphasising the potential of vocational pedagogies. The role of VET was more clearly stated in the 2013 report of the first thematic working group on early school leaving set by the European Commission (2011-13). The report of this group identified work-based learning as one dimension of measures to address ELET. This dimension has since faded and is hardly identifiable in the work of the second working group on school policy (2014-15).

The study also found that although countries are increasingly developing comprehensive strategies to tackle early leaving, the role of VET in these

strategies is not always clear. Good examples of comprehensive strategies to tackle early leaving that cover the whole education and training sector, including clear actions in VET, can be found in Austria, Belgium-fl and the Netherlands. Other countries have VET reforms and policies that aim to improve the quality of VET and also tackle ELVET (such as Estonia, Denmark or the French Community of Belgium), but these are not necessarily part of broader comprehensive strategies.

Considering the size of the ELVET problem, along with the prevention and remedial potential of VET, much clearer emphasis should be given to related policies. Both the EU and the Member States need to acknowledge VET's role in strategic documents, and reflect this in their policies and programmes. National authorities have an important role in:

- (a) improving VET quality, for instance by ensuring the quality and preparedness of VET teachers and in-company trainers, and by improving the alignment of VET programmes with the skills required in the labour market;
- (b) improving the flexibility of the system, making it easier for learners to change pathways. When changing programme, learners should not have to repeat any learning they have already completed. Repetition can be avoided by breaking down programmes into units or modules and offering opportunities for credit transfer or recognition of prior learning. It is also important to introduce flexible modes of delivery (such as evening classes and online learning) and to ensure that VET pathways can lead to progression into higher education;
- (c) promoting a positive image of VET by providing more and better quality information about VET programmes; by developing promotional campaigns to help to raise awareness of VET; and by providing role models, for instance inviting current and former VET students as ambassadors to share their experience with other learners or early leavers.

EU and international initiatives can also have an important role in raising VET attractiveness. The possibility to participate in student exchanges, through the Erasmus+ programme, can be a strong motivating factor for VET learners to continue and succeed in their studies. Skills competitions at national and international level, such as those organised by WorldSkills initiative, can be equally motivating for many VET students. The European Commission is launching the first European VET skills week in December 2016 to showcase vocational studies as a first class option while raising awareness of the wide range of opportunities that VET provides. By making VET a first choice, the *New skills agenda for Europe* (European Commission, 2016) can boost further

developments to improve the attractiveness and image of VET. This should be seen as an equally good career choice as traditional higher education.

## 6.2. Targeting activities and combining measures for success

The study identified six profiles of young people that vary by level of disengagement and the type of challenges in education and training as well as in other spheres of life. These include:

- (a) learners escaping or confronting the system;
- (b) learners disengaging due to difficulties in transition;
- (c) early leavers facing complex personal, social and/or family issues.

Effective strategies should address the specific cause of the problem and be adapted to the profile of the young person. It is crucial to collect information on his or her characteristics and needs to be able to offer tailored support.

The use of a systematic approach by education and training providers to identifying learners at risk of early leaving is the first step in tackling the problem. Learners at risk of early leaving present different distress characteristics, often a long time before they leave. If these signs are detected promptly, there are more chances of reengaging young people with relatively simple interventions. The study shows that early intervention allows for better results with fewer resources.

Each learner is different and so are his or her ways of showing that something is not going well. Absenteeism, low attainment, and disruptive behaviour in the classroom are often linked to potential early leaving. Other signs, such as emotional distress, can easily go unnoticed. Practitioners are best placed to spot pupils at risk as they track absenteeism and academic attainment in their daily work; being in direct and regular contact with the learners also puts them in the best position to spot distress. However, they often do not have the time or resources to identify and act upon risk signs. Training professionals to be able to detect early these signs, and link learners at risk with the necessary measures tailored to their needs, increases the chances that learners remain engaged in education and training.

It is of utmost importance to have the means to reach out to those who have already left the system as swiftly as possible. To motivate youngsters to return to education and training requires coordination of different services and different education and training providers to offer an adequate response to needs.

### 6.3. Evaluating progress to inform policy-making

Most Member States have a multitude of activities, financed from local, regional, national or European sources that aim to combat ELET. However, evidence about which ones are making the difference and to whom, is often lacking. It is likely that some of the funding is allocated to measures that make little or no improvement, especially in the longer term. Understanding which measures are successful and for which target group is a precondition for improving effectiveness and efficiency of national strategies to combat early leaving.

These have one overall objective: to ensure that more young people achieve upper secondary qualifications and ultimately successfully transit from school to work. To do this, the measures aim at:

- (a) retaining young people in education and training until they qualify;
- (b) reintegrating them into education and training, and retaining them until they qualify.

To understand whether the policies put in place are effective, it is important to measure whether they make any difference; measuring whether there is a change in the evolution of retention rates and in the share of people who qualify through compensation measures.

Most of the measures analysed do not have evaluations that would show the ultimate effect of the policy on retention and qualification attainment. They are evaluated against their output data: numbers of participants or numbers of beneficiaries (32 of the 44 measures analysed had such data). They are sometimes evaluated according to whether the beneficiaries stayed in education and training (27 measures) but more rarely according to whether the beneficiaries ultimately achieved a qualification (15 measures). For almost half of the measures analysed (20) evaluators collected feedback from beneficiaries about their perception of the measure. They rarely collected information about whether their education performance improved (nine cases) or whether their attitude to education and training changed positively (15 cases).

Some of the evaluations analysed the whole spectrum of indicators that should be captured in intervention logic: inputs, outputs and results (possibly different layers). The results observed were not discussed in relation to resources expended to implement the measure. Further, many of the evaluations did not capture intermediate results which are crucial to understanding how the ultimate effect happens:

- (a) the evaluations rarely unpacked the black-box of how an intervention influences young persons' education and training pathway or institutions' capacity to tackle early leaving. The extent to which young people were

- more motivated, more confident, had better well-being, as a result of the activities is rarely measured;
- (b) targets for the interventions are rarely set and this makes judgements on performance more difficult;
  - (c) baseline data are often not available so it is difficult to analyse the change that the intervention brought. Most of the evaluations only give a static picture of results and outputs without discussing the change that these interventions enabled;
  - (d) comparisons with control groups or with other comparable interventions are scarce.

A key evaluator's tool to develop a monitoring and evaluation indicator framework is the programme/policy intervention logic presented in this study. The intervention logic breaks down the programme rationale into:

- (a) inputs: what the programme does;
- (b) process/activities: how the programme does it;
- (c) outputs: what is directly produced/delivered and who takes part;
- (d) intermediary outcomes: what concrete changes can be identified at the level of individuals (learners or practitioners) or institutions;
- (e) ultimate outcomes: to what extent the programme reduces early leaving.

If contextual factors influence programme implementation or its chances of success, these should be also clarified. The discussion of the intervention logic can clarify any assumptions about the context which are considered as necessary for the programme to succeed. Examples of contextual features (not directly linked to the policy/programme) which can affect programme performance are:

- (a) level of unemployment;
- (b) staff turnover;
- (c) relationship between key stakeholder organisations;
- (d) changes in political priorities.

Monitoring and evaluation indicators should be defined for each aspect of the intervention logic. If indicators only capture outputs, the evaluation does not say anything about the real change that can be attributed to the programme. If they only focus on the ultimate outcomes, then it is not clear how concretely the programme made (or failed to make) a difference. If the change in ultimate outcomes is small and no intermediate outcomes are measured, it is not possible to see what aspects of the intervention logic and the programme rationale are failing. This makes it difficult to recommend adjustments.

There is a need to promote an evaluation culture for policies to tackle early leaving in Europe and to build evaluation capacity so that the evaluations focus on those indicators which enable policy-makers to make decisions about future actions.

#### 6.4. Measuring policy impact and setting improvement priorities

Most countries/regions monitor rates of early leaving and their evolution at system level. Some also have systems to monitor the evolution of early leaving rates more locally (regional, local and school/provider level). Local data are important as they enable development of targeted actions. However, evaluations need to go beyond this level of monitoring. If a positive evolution is observed, it is important to understand what triggered it to enable learning and transfer from effective practices.

Developing structural indicators for system supports is already taking place for the United Nations, to the highest attainable standard of health, and can be extended by analogy for social inclusion in education (Downes, 2014a), with indicators pertaining to VET. Structural indicators are generally framed as potentially verifiable yes/no answers; they address whether or not key structures, mechanisms or principles are in place in a system. As relatively enduring features or key conditions of a system, they are, however, potentially malleable. They offer a scrutiny of State or institutional effort (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2005; 2006; Downes, 2014a).

Structural indicators pertain to features of a system where something can be changed (laws, spaces, roles and responsibilities, key guiding principles, potentially malleable dimensions to an education, health and/or community system). They offer a framework for strategic direction as to what issues are addressed at system level, while also offering flexibility at local or national contextual level as to how to address these issues.

An important tension in education, including VET, is between prescriptive top-down models based on centralised direction and bottom-up processes that emphasise local creativity and autonomy for learning. Structural indicators offer a bridge between these two tensions, as an approach to aid both central strategic direction and accountability on the one hand, and local flexibility and creativity on the other. Structural indicators also focus throughout on problems and solutions at system level to scrutinise potential for improvement through proportionate measures for legitimate aims. They offer a distinctive focus on availability of services and supports for strategic purposes at system level. For example, the

question can be framed with regard to a percentage of a practice in a given system, such as whether more than 80% of schools in an area provide a particular feature, so that it can be characterised as the norm within a system; alternatively, a question can be asked as to whether fewer than 30% of schools provide a particular feature (Downes, 2014b) which would highlight its lack of mainstreaming into systemic practice.

The weight of evidence required for a structural indicator may depend on its scope and purpose. A strong burden of proof for aspects to be structural indicators would be met through inferences based on weighted mean effect sizes and correlations between study features and effect sizes, in an international meta-analysis. This is available for example for aspects of structural indicators in the areas of school bullying and also social and emotional learning (Downes and Cefai, 2016).

Considered as an action-guiding policy tool in a specific context or as a self-assessment tool, other standards of evidence can also be encompassed to inform structural indicators. A different possible use for a structural indicators matrix tool is to help policy-makers brainstorm on potential policy options and pathways for system development on a given issue, through identifying structural features of promising practices that could be replicated elsewhere at system levels. Different purposes for clusters of structural indicators bring not only different levels of stringency for being informed by evidence, but also different kinds of review processes for feedback on the presence or absence of these structural features in a given system.

Table 29 presents a few examples of structural indicators that could be used to check and promote reflection on the use of motivational activities to engage at-risk learners.

**Table 29. Examples of structural indicators on motivational activities**

Motivational activities to engage learners at risk of ELET	Opportunity for large majority of VET learners to engage in VET provider related sports activities	Yes/No
	Opportunity for large majority of VET learners to engage in VET-provider-related arts activities	Yes/No
	Opportunity for large majority of VET learners to engage in VET school related active citizenship (local environment, volunteer, service learning) activities	Yes/No

*Source:* Based on draft list of indicators developed by Paul Downes for Cedefop's electronic toolkit (forthcoming).

Structural indicators can be at a national strategic framework level and at an institutional project level, both for external evaluation and self-evaluation. The indicators provide recognition of diverse starting points of some countries relative to others. Structural indicators are tools and, as such, are only as useful as the



purposes and strategies to which they are put. Key issues for concern in developing structural indicators include:

- (a) clarity of purpose regarding what social policy goals the structural indicators are key system conditions to support;
- (b) clarity of terminology for each structural indicator;
- (c) development of adequate review processes and feedback mechanism for the system scrutiny.

## 6.5. Mobilising European funds and programmes

Exploring ways to benefit from EU funding and other EU programmes to address early leaving may support the efforts at national level. The European Social Fund (ESF) and the European regional development fund alone will inject over EUR 30 billion to support skills development during 2014-20; the Erasmus+ programme supports skills development in education and training with nearly EUR 15 billion (European Commission, 2016, p. 3).

Policy impact evaluation is particularly relevant in the context of the ESF conditionalities which emphasise the need for evidence-based policies and the need to monitor and evaluate the extent to which policies implemented lead to expected results (European Commission, 2014). Previous work at EU level focused on issuing guidance on how to address early leaving<sup>(30)</sup>. The next step in this cooperation could be to develop guidance on how to monitor and evaluate measures to address this phenomenon (Psifidou, 2016c). Cedefop is working towards that direction and by 2017 will develop an electronic toolkit to support professionals.

In 2006, an audit of the ESF examined the nature of actions aiming to reduce early leaving in six Member States (Court of Auditors, 2006). Conclusions raised concerns that funding was being applied without analysis of the existing situation or targeted results. Further, justifications for both the overall level of funding allocated to ELET, or for which regions received funding, were not sufficient. Crucially, monitoring actions in terms of quantifying outcomes of activities was largely unavailable.

The ex-post evaluation of ESF 2007-13 investment in human capital (ICFI, 2015) reviewed a sample of interventions focusing on early leavers. It found that the effectiveness of interventions supported varied and so did their sustainability.

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<sup>(30)</sup> See the work of the first and the second thematic working groups set up by the European Commission: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/school/early-school-leavers\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/school/early-school-leavers_en.htm)

In many cases, the indicators used to measure success of funded activities provide limited or no insight into the effects the activity had on pathways of young people.

In order to ensure investment in policies to tackle early leaving are more effective and efficient, the ESF for the period 2014-20 imposes certain *ex-ante* conditionalities. Countries that wish to use ESF money for policies tackling early leaving have to meet several preconditions; they particularly have to show that there is a strategic policy framework in place. This requirement is directly based on the findings of the 2009 audit and criteria for such a policy framework are further specified in the guidance on ESF conditionalities (European Commission, 2014), emphasising:

- (a) availability of data to make policies and measures targeted;
- (b) evidence-based approach;
- (c) a comprehensive approach to tackling the issue of ELET.

This framework creates strong momentum for common work at EU level on monitoring and evaluation of measures to address ELET.

The Erasmus+ programme for 2014-20 defines early leaving as one of the priorities for strategic partnerships among institutions. The programme funds international exchanges of students and school staff as well as partnership projects to support cooperation and innovation at national and local level. It aims to contribute to the objectives of the ET 2020 strategy, particularly the education targets which include reducing early leaving.

However, the interim evaluation of the predecessor programme (Public Policy and Management Institute, 2011) found that the participation of disadvantaged groups in the programme was low. It also found that most project beneficiaries considered that the issue of early leaving was not relevant to their project. Early leavers were most frequently addressed by the Grundtvig strand of the programme which concerned non-vocational adult learning, meaning that people benefitting from these measures were not in programmes leading to a recognised qualification. VET projects rarely addressed the issue of early leaving despite the strong need in this sector.

The study identified the importance of motivational and confidence-building activities for the reengagement of young people into education and training. Short-term mobility and joint transnational projects may have such positive effect. Mobility opportunities for initial VET (IVET) apprentices and learners are supported under Erasmus+. However, mobility opportunities for IVET learners are largely insufficient to meet current demand. Only a few countries include such mobility opportunities in their national education, training and youth schemes. The [VET mobility scoreboard](#) developed by Cedefop in cooperation with the

European Commission gives a picture of the measures in place to support IVET mobility across the EU and provide a good basis for identifying areas where more needs to be done. Further, the Erasmus+ mobility actions could develop a specific focus on disadvantaged groups who are likely to see important benefit from participating in such activities.

The study acknowledges the contribution of VET-specific pedagogies and particularly of work-based learning to making VET more attractive and engaging learners. But it also pointed to the lack of apprenticeship placements, which may cause dropping out from particular VET programmes. Currently, just a quarter of students in upper secondary vocational education attend work-based programmes, while general and higher education programmes rarely include any work-based experience. Business-education partnerships, involving all sectors and levels of education and training, can unlock this potential. Some successful initiatives are showing the way, engaging labour market actors in education and training and helping young people get a foot on the jobs ladder. The European Alliance for apprenticeships has so far mobilised 250 000 in-company training and job opportunities for young people. Through the European pact for youth, one million young people will be trained in digital skills, and a 'smart classroom' programme will reach 100 000 students. Through the Grand coalition for digital jobs, companies and other organisations have offered millions of additional training opportunities <sup>(31)</sup> (European Commission, 2016, p. 13). Developing a set of support services to facilitate knowledge-sharing, networking and cooperation on apprenticeships at national level can provide valuable information to learners on how to find such opportunities and reach their expectations.

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<sup>(31)</sup> European Commission: *Pledge tracker*. <http://www.linkedpolicies.eu/pledge/>

## List of abbreviations

abH	<i>Ausbildungsbegleitende Hilfen</i> vocational training accompanying measures (Germany)
AFEV	<i>Association de la fondation étudiante pour la ville</i> student foundation for the city association (France)
ALJ	<i>action locale pour jeunes</i> local action for youth (Luxembourg)
ASLAM	<i>Associazione scuole lavoro Alto Milanese</i> school work association Alto Milanese (Italy)
BOP	<i>Berufsorientierungsprogramm</i> vocational orientation programme (Germany)
BRON	<i>Basisregister onderwijs</i> basic records database of education
BvB	<i>Berufsvorbereitende Maßnahmen</i> pre-vocational training measures (Germany)
COIP	<i>cours d'orientation et d'initiation professionnelles</i> guidance and professional initiation courses (Luxembourg)
CPU	<i>certification par unités</i> certification per unit (Belgium)
CV	curriculum vitae
CVET	continuing vocational education and training
E2C	<i>École de la deuxième chance</i> second chance schools (France)
ELET	early leaving from education and training
ELVET	early leaving from vocational education and training
EPIDE	<i>Établissement pour l'insertion dans l'emploi</i> – Establishment for labour market insertion
EPIS	<i>Empresários pela inclusão social</i> entrepreneurs for social inclusion (Portugal)
ESF	European Social Fund
ET 2020	Education and training 2020
EU	European Union
IPDM	<i>Insertion professionnelle divers métiers</i> professional initiation to various occupations (Luxembourg)
IPR	<i>integrált pedagógiai rendszer</i> integrated pedagogical system (Hungary)
IVET	initial vocational education and training
JBA	<i>Jugendberufsagentur</i> Youth Labour Employment Agency (Germany)
LCA	learning certificate applied (Ireland)
MASS	<i>medical advice for sick-reported students</i> (the Netherlands)
NEET	not in education, employment or training
NGO	non-governmental organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PES	public employment service
PSAD	<i>Plates-formes de suivi et d'appui aux décrocheurs</i> platform for monitoring and coordination of early leavers (France)
QUABB	<i>Qualifizierte Ausbildungsbegleitung in Betrieb und Berufsschule</i> programme of qualified supervision in vocational schools and companies (Germany)

TEIP	<i>territórios educativos de intervenção prioritária</i> – educational territories of priority intervention (Portugal)
ÜBA	<i>Überbetriebliche Lehrausbildung</i> supra-company training programme (Austria)
VerA	<i>Verhinderung von Ausbildungsabbrüchen</i> prevention of training dropout (Germany)
VET	vocational education and training
VLC	voluntary labour corps ( <i>Ochotnicze Hufce Pracy</i> ) (Poland)

## Country abbreviations

AT	Austria
BE	Belgium
BE-fr	French Community of Belgium
BE-fl	Flemish Community of Belgium
BG	Bulgaria
CH	Switzerland
CY	Cyprus
CZ	Czech Republic
DE	Germany
DK	Denmark
EE	Estonia
EL	Greece
ES	Spain
FI	Finland
FR	France
HR	Croatia
HU	Hungary
IE	Republic of Ireland
IT	Italy
LT	Lithuania
LU	Luxembourg
LV	Latvia
MT	Malta
NL	Netherlands
NO	Norway
PL	Poland
PT	Portugal
RO	Romania
SE	Sweden
SI	Slovenia
SK	Slovak Republic
UK	United Kingdom

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## ANNEX

# Reviewed evaluations and main results

Table A1. List of evaluations reviewed

	Measure	Link to website	Link to evaluation
BE-fr	<i>Expairs</i> project	<a href="#">Université de Mons</a>	The evaluation was planned but could not be conducted
	Certification per unit ( <i>Certification par unité</i> , CPU)	<a href="#">Gallilelex cda</a>	School inspection
DK	<i>Retention caravan</i> ( <i>Fastholdelseskaravanen</i> , 2008-12)	<a href="#">Retention Caravan and EU report</a>	Ministry of Education final report
	Youth guidance centres ( <i>Ungdommens Uddannelsesvejledning</i> ) <sup>(a)</sup>	<a href="#">Euroguidance</a>	2007 evaluation
AT	Youth coaching scheme ( <i>Jugendcoaching</i> )	<a href="#">Neba.at</a>	2013 evaluation – final report
	Apprenticeship coaching ( <i>Coaching und Beratung für Lehrlinge und Lehrbetriebe</i> )	<a href="#">Bmwf.gv.at</a>	Brief report of pilot phase evaluation
	Supra-company training programme ( <i>Überbetriebliche Lehrausbildung</i> , ÜBA)	<a href="#">UBA Information</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2010 evaluation</li> <li>• 2011 evaluation</li> </ul>
	<i>Produktionsschule</i> (former <i>AusbildungsFIT</i> , ready for education and training)	<a href="#">Produktionsschule</a>	2014 annual report
DE	Programme of qualified supervision in vocational schools and companies (QuABB)	<a href="#">QuABB</a>	2014 final report- evaluation
	Vocational orientation programme ( <i>Berufsorientierungsprogramme</i> , BOP)	<a href="#">BOP</a>	2014 special report
	Prevention of training dropout ( <i>Verhinderung von Ausbildungsabbrüchen</i> , VerA)	<a href="#">VerA</a>	2012/13 IES evaluation
	Transfer project for assisted training in Baden-Württemberg ( <i>Carpo</i> ) (1.9.2008-31.12.2011)	<a href="#">Carpo</a>	Magazine article
	Training support ( <i>Ausbildungsbegleitende Hilfen</i> , abH)	<a href="#">abH</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1991 external evaluation</li> <li>• preliminary study on further evaluation</li> </ul>
	Youth labour employment agency, Hamburg region ( <i>Jugendberufsagentur</i> , JBA) <sup>(b)</sup>	<a href="#">JBA</a>	Evaluation in process at the time this research was concluded.
EE	Back to school in Estonia – Programme KUTSE (ESF project)	<a href="#">KUTSE</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2009/13 final report on development of Estonian VET</li> <li>• final evaluation available upon request from <a href="#">Innove</a></li> </ul>
	Pathfinder centres ( <i>Rajaleidja keskused</i> )	<a href="#">Pathfinder</a>	Not evaluated by the time this research was concluded

	Measure	Link to website	Link to evaluation
FR	Platforms for monitoring and coordination of early leavers (PSAD)	<a href="#">Eduscol</a>	<a href="#">2014 diagnosis report</a>
	Experimentation of the association AFEV <sup>(c)</sup> (2009-12) providing individualised support to VET students at risk of dropping out	<a href="#">AFEV</a>	<a href="#">2012 evaluation report</a>
	Innovative pole ( <i>Pôle innovant lycéen</i> , PIL)	<a href="#">PIL</a>	No evaluation. Monitoring information available in: <a href="#">Guide des solutions innovantes</a>
	New opportunity school in Lyon (Lycées de la nouvelle chance in Villeurbane and Clergy)	<a href="#">Lycees de la nouvelle chance</a>	No evaluation. Monitoring information available in: <a href="#">Network of the Lycees</a>
	Second chance schools ( <i>Écoles de la deuxième chance</i> )	<a href="#">Network E2C</a>	<a href="#">Reseau E2C France, activity report 2014</a>
	Schools for integration organised by the Ministry of Defence ( <i>Établissements pour l'insertion dans l'emploi</i> , EPIDE)	<a href="#">EPIDE</a>	<a href="#">EPIDE figures</a>
HU	<i>Dobbantó</i> programme	<a href="#">Fszk.hu</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Bognár 2011 evaluation report</a></li> </ul>
	The integrated pedagogical system ( <i>integrált pedagógiai rendszer</i> , IPR) – Roma education fund	<a href="#">Emet.gov.hu</a>	<a href="#">2009 evaluation</a>
IE	<i>Youthreach</i> programme and community training centres (CTC)	<a href="#">Youthreach.ie</a>	<a href="#">2010 evaluation</a>
	Youth guarantee: Ballymun youth guarantee pilot	<a href="#">Ballymun pilot</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">2015 evaluation</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">2015 policy and practice report</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">2015 report, Duggan</a></li> </ul>
	Leaving certificate applied (LCA)	<a href="#">Education.ie</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Research paper 2010</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">McCoy et al. 2014</a></li> </ul>
IT	Crafts square, Turin ( <i>Piazza dei Mestieri</i> )	<a href="#">Piazza dei mestieri</a>	<a href="#">Bilancio di missione – Ufficio Pio</a>
	School work association Alto Milanese ( <i>Associazione scuole lavoro Alto Milanese</i> , ASLAM)	<a href="#">ASLAM</a>	<a href="#">Monitoring report</a>
LU	Guidance and professional initiation courses ( <i>cours d'orientation et d'initiation professionnelle</i> , COIP)	<a href="#">COIP and Ministry's web page</a>	<a href="#">2007-11 evaluation</a>
	Second chance schools ( <i>Écoles de la deuxième chance</i> )	<a href="#">E2C</a>	<a href="#">2011-12 evaluation</a>
	<i>Local action for youth (Action locale pour jeunes</i> , ALJ – <i>stages découvertes</i> ) <sup>(d)</sup>	<a href="#">ALJ stages découvertes</a>	<a href="#">Information about the evaluation</a>
NL	Dropout policy, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• qualification obligation</li> <li>• personal education number</li> <li>• digital absence portal</li> <li>• career orientation, guidance</li> <li>• smooth transfer (<i>VSV-aanpak</i>)</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Drive to reduce dropout</a>	<a href="#">2011-15 evaluation</a>

	Measure	Link to website	Link to evaluation
	<i>Getting started (Aan de slag)</i>	<a href="#">Aan de slag</a>	No evaluation yet. <a href="#">Information about the ongoing evaluation</a>
	M@ZL: medical advice to apprentices reported as sick ( <i>Medische advisering ziek gemelde leerling</i> )	<a href="#">M@ZL</a>	<a href="#">Results from M@ZL evaluation</a>
NO	Certificate of practice pilot project ( <i>Praksisbrev</i> )	<a href="#">Udir.no</a>	<a href="#">2008-11 evaluation</a>
PL	Voluntary labour corps (VLC)	<a href="#">OHP.pl</a>	Evidence from evaluation available upon request
PT	Vocational courses ( <i>cursos vocacionais</i> )	<a href="#">List of vocational courses</a>	Evaluation of vocational courses <sup>(e)</sup>
	Second chance school of Matosinhos ( <i>escola segunda oportunidade Matosinhos</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Educare.pt</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Camara municipal</a></li> </ul>	<a href="#">2013 study</a>
UK-England	Youth contract	<a href="#">Gov.uk</a>	<a href="#">Research report</a>
UK-Northern Ireland	Success through skills strategy – apprenticeship scheme	<a href="#">Delni.gov</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">2011 report</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">statistical information</a></li> </ul>
UK-Northern Ireland	<i>Training for success</i>	<a href="#">Training for success</a>	<a href="#">Statistical bulletin</a>
UK-Wales	<i>Pathways to apprenticeship</i>	<a href="#">Gov.wales</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">interim evaluation</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">final report</a></li> </ul>

<sup>(a)</sup> <https://www.ug.dk/6til10klasse/ungdommens-uddannelsesvejledning>; and <http://euroguidance.eu/guidance-systems/guidance-in-denmark-overview/>

<sup>(b)</sup> <http://www.hamburg.de/jugendberufsagentur/ueber-uns/>

<sup>(c)</sup> Student association AFEV (*Association de la fondation étudiante pour la ville*).

<sup>(d)</sup> <http://portal.education.lu/alj/en-us/short-terminternships.aspx>

<sup>(e)</sup> The evaluation of vocational courses was published in 2015 after the analyses conducted under Cedefop's study were finalised. It is thus not among the evaluations examined in Chapter 5 of this report.

Table A2. Overview of main results reported

	Name of the measure	Describe the main evidence of success
AT	Coaching and counselling for apprentices and training companies	77.2% of participating apprentices set themselves the objective to stay in the dual system. 59.3% of participants state they reached their target. 25.9% reached the targets partly or changed targets and reached them.
	<i>Produktions-schule</i>	The measure is considered successful on the basis that it was first implemented at regional level and has since been rolled out nationally. According to monitoring data, 68% of students completed the measure successfully.
	Supra training	A considerably higher percentage (77%) of young adults remain in training or transfer to a company than those who leave before achieving a qualification. The measure increases participation in education and training within the target group and can reduce the number of unemployed young individuals, also reducing labour market inequalities for disadvantaged groups.
	Youth coaching	According to the evaluation, about 87% of schools that already implemented youth coaching in 2012 agreed that youth coaching makes a significant contribution to dropout prevention.
BE-fr	Certification per unit (CPU)	The majority of respondents at regional level felt that the CPU has impacted achievement of learners because of its flexibility. School inspection evaluation of March 2012 observed that the CPU increased the motivation of learners to continue their training. Also, the fact that it was generalised to all VET schools after a pilot phase is considered an indication of its effectiveness.
	<i>Expairs</i>	The initiative was not evaluated. However the possibility for schools to experiment with alternative pedagogic and orientation methods (which was tested in this initiative) was mainstreamed through a national decree,
DE	Vocational training accompanying measures ( <i>Ausbildungsbegleitende Hilfen, abH</i> )	The measure was evaluated in 1991: since then no new data have been available
	Vocational orientation programme (BOP)	The 2010 evaluation report shows positive results. Almost 80% of students answered that they now know which professions are not suitable for them and more than 60% stated that they now know which professions are suitable for them. The result is partly confirmed by the 2014 report. The programme is already rolled out at national level (due to positive results of 2010 evaluation) and currently being expanded to new types of schools.
	<i>Carpo</i> ( <i>Assistierte Ausbildung, assisted VET</i> )	Data were available although a report had not been published. According to these data, 95% of <i>Carpo</i> apprentices pass their final vocational school and practical exams, 55% were directly employed by their apprenticeship company, another 23% started working in a different company and 98% of companies as well as apprentices involved would recommend <i>Carpo</i> . There was also a lower than average dropout rate from <i>Carpo</i> -assisted apprenticeships.
	Pre-training programme (EQ)	According to the evaluation, most (70%) of EQ participants are accepted as regular apprentices, giving them a chance of a regular vocational career.
	Youth Labour Employment Agency (JBA)	JBA Hamburg has become a well-known institution among young people in the region and provides faster and more direct support than before. The initiative has been replicated in many German regions, the idea of a one-stop government is especially effective in urban areas.

	Name of the measure	Describe the main evidence of success
	Programme of qualified supervision in vocational schools and companies (QuABB)	The evaluation concluded that QuABB had been successful in countering early leaving from education and training. According to the evaluation report, more than 60% of learners are still in the same apprenticeship after three months following the last QuABB intervention. Positive results are confirmed by interviewees, with a successful completion rate of 80%.
	Prevention of training dropout (VerA)	31.5% of respondents to the evaluation report stated that they have successfully completed their education or training and 41.4% stated that they are continuing their education or training. More than 90% would recommend the initiative according to the evaluation report, as would all the people interviewed. The measure has been implemented throughout the country with rising numbers of regional coordinators and of tandem coaching sessions.
DK	<i>Retention caravan</i>	The final evaluation of the <i>Retention caravan</i> concluded that the initiatives had a positive impact on the retention rate of VET students from ethnic minorities; they also had a positive impact on the retention of disadvantaged Danish VET students. For all students, the participating schools reduced the EL rate more (28.0%) than non-participating schools (24.6%). For students of Danish origin there was a reduction in the EL rate of 29.6% at the participating schools, compared to 24.4% at the non-participating schools. For students of non-Danish origin the reduction in EL at participating schools was 22.2% (compared to 25.9% at non-participating schools). The <i>Retention caravan</i> therefore reached and exceeded its target of reducing the ELET rate by 20%.
	Youth guidance centres	According to the 2007 report, 41% of students who rated themselves as very engaged also said that the counsellor had had some or a lot of impact on their plans after completion of the school year. The 2014 report showed very high participation rates in the guidance scheme and also reported high levels of readiness to choose an education.
EE	KUTSE programme	The programme succeeded after the target group was extended to include low-skilled adults (older than 25) in need of certification or retraining. Instead of the planned 400 young adult graduates who had discontinued their VET secondary education, low-skilled adults 25+ without any certificate who graduated and obtained a certificate more than doubled (416) the expected goal (200).
	Pathfinder centres	The measures was not evaluated at the time of carrying out this study as implementation started in 2013. The goals set for the first year have been met. These focused on raising awareness of the measure in schools and starting some preliminary counselling.
FR	Experimentation of the student association AFEV	Results show that VET students in the measure feel more confident about their education pathway and professional future after receiving the individual support. They also show better capacity to commit to their education: they have better capacity to concentrate and participate in class.
	<i>Établissement pour l'insertion dans l'emploi</i> (EPIDE)	According to the EPIDE 2014 national activity report and to interviews with staff and participants, 51.2% of supported volunteers moved to employment of further training. Interviews confirm that the measure has positive impacts on life chances of participants. Volunteers highlight important benefits of participation at the personal level as well as basic skills and knowledge.
	Platform for monitoring and coordination of early leavers (PSAD)	45% of participants engaged in a more or less sustainable solution upon being contacted and assessed by PSAD. Platforms are globally seen as effective in the sense that, according to interviewees, they have achieved their primary aim of improving coordination at local level.



	Name of the measure	Describe the main evidence of success
	Lycée nouvelle chance (LNC)	Since the launch of the LNC, the average success rate of pupils at the vocational baccalaureate exam has exceeded 90% (100% in 2014). Within five months following graduation 4.6% obtained a job; 40.6% continued their education and training. Only 11.3% were inactive and 3.7% were in another situation, including maternity leave.
	Innovative pole, PIL	Monitoring data for the PIL show that 75% of its learners find a solution (further education and training, employment). One year after leaving the PIL, 68% of learners follow a course that they chose.
	Second chance schools (E2C)	The rate at which the E2C schools have expanded throughout France is indicative of the measure's success: the number of supported young people increased from 15 000 in 100+ sites in 2015. On average, immediate tangible positive outcomes are observed for more than half of those exiting the E2C system.
HU	<i>Dobbanto</i>	Several evaluations established the satisfaction of students and teachers alike. 98% of respondents claimed to be happy to have been part of <i>Dobbantó</i> and 86% considered that the knowledge acquired was useful for their future life.
	Integrated pedagogical system (IPR)	Students in IPR schools were performing better than in the control schools. Two schools found positive changes in classroom management, especially in regard to increase in peer cooperation, higher level of student autonomy and better teacher-student relationship. Considerable development was observed concerning in-class relationships between students.
IE	Learning certificate applied (LCA)	Qualitative evidence suggests that the LCA appears to have acted as a safety-net by retaining young people in the school system. Case study interviews also demonstrate that students develop more positive attitudes to learning and began to enjoy school.
	Ballymun	98% of those involved in training, work programmes or employment had received their offer within four months.
	<i>Youthreach</i>	Data on learners' destinations one year after enrolment show that 46% continued at the centre, 15% were in employment, 11% were unemployed, 4% were in further education at FAS and 6% in other further education, 18% were in 'other' category.
IT	ASLAM	In 2008, there were 294 students in the school, 84% of which graduated and 73% of which found work immediately after leaving the school.
	<i>Piazza dei mestieri</i>	Teachers and tutors agree that the environment created by <i>Piazza dei Mestieri</i> really contributes to making the students feel like they are in an environment where they are understood, supported and valued.
LU	Guidance and professional initiation courses (COIP) and professional initiation courses to various occupations (IPDM)	Tracking of pupils three months after the completion of their COIP/IPDM class in June shows that by September, around 28% has taken up an apprenticeship and 22% had integrated a lower secondary VET programme. Around 4% found a job and 3% had constituted their education abroad.
	<i>Local action for youth</i>	Among the 186 trainees of 2013/14, by October 2014: 34% were NEETs, 30% had integrated VET course, 20% had started VET apprenticeship course, and for 16% no data were available. The three-year tracking exercise of 64 early leavers who did a traineeship in 2010-11, showed that by the school year 2014/15, 10 were in an apprenticeship and nine were enrolled in VET course. ALJ collaborators were not able to collect data for the remaining young people (reasons include moving, changed contact details).

	Name of the measure	Describe the main evidence of success
	Second chance school (E2C)	90% of pupils completed their studies at the E2C and successfully reintegrated into mainstream generalist and VET education (lower and upper, including apprenticeships) or obtained employment (only in a few cases). Longitudinal evaluations show that two years after having left the E2C 70% of pupils are in a 'positive' situation. A positive situation signifies that students either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reintegrated into mainstream education;</li> <li>entered employment (either on a fixed-term or permanent contract).</li> </ul> 15% of pupils are in a 'negative' situation, i.e. they are neither in education, employment or education (NEETs). For 15% of pupils the situation is unknown, as they were unable to be tracked/contacted.
NL	Drive to reduce dropout	From 2008 until this study was carried out, there has been a decrease in the number of early leavers at national level both in basic vocational education (VMBO) and VET
	<i>Getting started</i>	The measure has not been evaluated
	<i>Medical advice for sick-reported students (MASS)</i>	Since the introduction of MASS, the level of absenteeism decreased from 8.5 days in 12 school weeks to 5.7 days after three months, and to 4.9 days after 12 months. The number of absence periods fell from 3.9 in 12 school weeks to 2.5 after three months, and to 2.2 after 12 months. In the control group, the absence days initially decreased from 10.4 to nine in 12 school weeks, after which an increase to 9.3 was measured. The number of absence periods initially decreased from 4.4 to 3.4, after which an increase to 3.7 was measured. The number of absence days per period remained about the same in both groups.
NO	Certificate of practice ( <i>Praksisbrev</i> )	The pilot project evaluation from 2011 showed promising results with 41 out of 51 students completing the certificate of practice (two-year programme) (80%). 25 ultimately succeeded in getting an apprenticeship contract after completing the certificate of practice.
PL	Voluntary labour corps (VLC)	In 2014, 86.5% of learners successfully completed lower secondary school, 95.6% obtained their final vocational qualification and 66.3% of VLC graduates were in employment or education or training.
PT	Vocational courses	The success rates (completion), excluding transitions to other programmes and emigration, are the following: in basic vocational courses, 74.3%* in 2012/13 and 79.0%* in 2013/14. In upper secondary Vocational Courses, 84.3%* in 2013/14.
	Second chance school	According to monitoring data from the school, in 2014/15: 15.4% completed a ninth year certificate and 70.7% of learners passed to the second year of PIEF and EFA programmes to complete the ninth year certificate.
UK-Northern Ireland	<i>Success through skills strategy</i>	Between the quarters ending October 2007 and January 2015, the number of participants on Apprenticeships NI (at the end of the quarter) increased from 2 209 to 6 875.
	Training for success	On average, 63% of <i>Skills for your life</i> and 67% of <i>Skills for work</i> participants achieve a recognised national vocational qualification (at levels 1, 2 or 3) before leaving the programme. Between 2008/09 and 2014/15, 3 251 participants completed <i>Skills for your life</i> (entry level in TfS). Of these, 63% gained a qualification and 28% progressed.
UK-Wales	<i>Pathways to apprenticeship</i>	In 2010/11: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>completion rate for further education was 92% compared to 91% for PtA.</li> <li>success was 81% for further education compared to 84% for PtA</li> <li>attainment was 88% for further education compared to 92% PtA.</li> </ul> In 2011/12: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>completion rate for further education was 91% compared to 92% for PtA</li> <li>success was 82% for further education compared to 85% for PtA</li> <li>attainment was 88% for further education compared to 93% for PtA.</li> </ul>

	<b>Name of the measure</b>	<b>Describe the main evidence of success</b>
UK-England	Youth contract	A reduction of 1.8% in the number of 16 to 17 year-olds NEETs in England was reported in 2013 after two years of implementation as generated by the national and core city models in combination. A 12% increase in overall engagement in learning and training was observed; 33% of national participants were assessed to be undertaking learning or training of 280 guided learning hours; 16% of the national participants were involved in learning or training involving less than 280 guided learning hours.

\* Provisional data.

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

# Leaving education early: putting vocational education and training centre stage

## Volume II: evaluating policy impact

This Cedefop study focuses on the contribution that vocational education and training (VET) can make to reducing early leaving from education and training (ELET). Published in two volumes, the first is dedicated to understanding better the learning pathways of young students, providing measurements of early leaving in VET, and understanding the role of VET in breaking the vicious cycle of early leaving and unemployment. This second volume reviews VET-related measures to tackle ELET, either by preventing learners dropping out and/or by bringing those who have already left back to education and training. This volume identifies and discusses the key features of successful policies and practices, plus the conditions necessary to evaluate and upscale successful regional and local practices to national strategies.

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**CEDEFOP**European Centre for the Development  
of Vocational Training

Europe 123, 570 01 Thessaloniki (Pylea), GREECE  
Postal address: PO Box 22427, 551 02 Thessaloniki, GREECE  
Tel. +30 2310490111, Fax +30 2310490020  
E-mail: [info@cedefop.europa.eu](mailto:info@cedefop.europa.eu)  
[www.cedefop.europa.eu](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu)



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