



**CEDEFOP**

European Centre for the Development  
of Vocational Training



## Tackling early leaving from education and training: prevention and early intervention in Europe



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Every Student Matters - Final Conference of CroCooS  
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# Cedefop work to combat early leaving

1. To facilitate evidence based policy making in Europe
2. To develop practical tools for policy makers and practitioners
3. To promote peer learning

## Watch the video

In 2014  
**4.4 million**  
 young people in Europe,  
 left education and training  
 before completing  
 upper secondary  
 education



**The role of VET in combatting  
 early leaving**

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**BRIEFING NOTE**

### Vocational education and training prevents and counteracts early leaving from the education system

New findings shed light on the role vocational education and training plays in attracting, retaining and reintegrating young people with different abilities and learning backgrounds

It is well known that young people facing learning difficulties or failure in learning to undertake groups such as migrants and other protected learners vocational education and training (VET) pathways. These inclusive programmes for low performers and for skills and/or health non-qualified learners may offer more young people a second chance to obtain a basic market-relevant qualification<sup>(1)</sup>.

Multi-level research, however, about young learners' educational trajectories, what type of education/training programme have they left? Why? How many of them didn't re-educate? How many other educational situations and training as a second chance option? And how many graduates re-enrolled in the European system? This research project, funded by the European Commission, has shed light on the role of vocational education and training in general and from educational trajectories, the learning early leavers drop into categories<sup>(2)</sup>. To answer these goals, Cedefop launched a four-year project in 2013, involving secondary data from the OECD's programme for the international assessment of adult competences (PIAAC) and European labour force and adult education surveys, as well as primary data collected from selected countries<sup>(3)</sup>. The results of the project are presented in:

- (1) *Young people at risk of dropping out: what can we do?* (Cedefop, 2014)
- (2) *Integrating categories of early leavers into the education system: how can we do it?* (Cedefop, 2014)
- (3) *How can we do it? A practical guide for policy makers and practitioners* (Cedefop, 2014)

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**BRIEFING NOTE**

### MAINSTREAMING VET POLICIES ADDRESSING EARLY LEAVING FROM EDUCATION AND TRAINING

From projects and local initiatives to national programmes and policies

In 2014, the rate of early leaving from education and training in the EU had dropped to just one percentage point above the 2008 benchmark of less than 10%. This encouraging trend is partly owed to the numerous projects and initiatives across Europe over the last four decades which have supported young people at risk of dropping out of education. Yet many of these initiatives have neither assessed whether nor found a market beyond their local context, in spite of their success. What has prevented policy makers and practitioners in other states replicating their benefits? What does it take to transfer successful practices and make them work in different settings?

Following analysis of the reasons and mechanisms of early leaving from education and training, and of policies preventing and counteracting the phenomenon<sup>(1)</sup>, Cedefop has been looking at the conditions for mainstreaming successful practices and initiatives into representative programmes and for policy learning from one country to another, in its study on *The role of VET in reducing early leaving from education and training*<sup>(2)</sup>. It has selected numerous initiatives and policies, which have proven efficient in mitigating or preventing early leaving, the factors, and identified their common key features.

**A persistent challenge: obtaining conclusive evaluations**

Evaluation of the effectiveness of policies addressing early leaving from VET are scarce in Europe. When they are carried out they often concern only a partial understanding of whether, and why, a given policy worked and of the benefits it offered to individual learners.

Cedefop has mapped over 300 different initiatives conducted in 28 European countries<sup>(3)</sup>. Evidence of success is available for only 44 of these. Some have not been evaluated but, undergoing by secondary data providing some clues as to the number of participants and, at least, their pathways.

Evaluation of the whole range of indicators allowing the advance effect of a policy on retention and qualification attainment, which has proven to inform policy makers, are rare in education from the side. There is a need to promote an evaluation culture to build rapidly existing policy learning.

**1. The Cedefop practice briefing notes**  
 www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-communications/11000  
 www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-communications/11001

**2. Briefing Note: Mainstreaming VET policies addressing early leaving from education and training**  
 www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-communications/11002

**3. All countries which have participated in ET 2008 and 2014.**



Leaving education early: putting vocational education and training centre stage  
 Volume I: investigating causes and extent



Leaving education early: putting vocational education and training centre stage  
 Volume II: evaluating policy impact

## Issues to be discussed today

- Why does leaving education early matter?
- How is it understood and measured?
- What are the causes?
- What is the situation in VET?
- What makes policy makers and VET teachers and trainers to tackle ELET effectively?
- How to (further) empower the role of VET teachers and trainers?



## Consequences of leaving education early

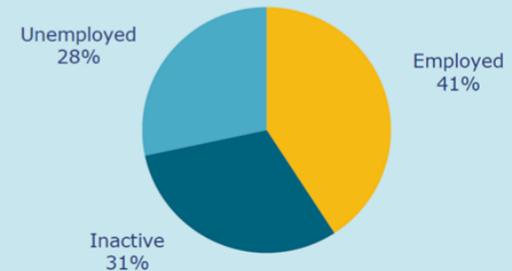
Unemployment affects persons with at most lower secondary education

More than half of the 12 million long-term unemployed today are low-educated

Low educated workers are five times more likely to be low-wage earners



About 60% of early school leavers are either inactive or unemployed



## The EU definition and its limitations

**“People aged 18-24 who have only lower secondary education or less and are no longer in education or training”**



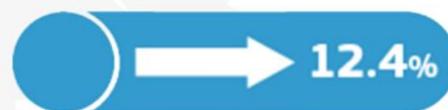
- **Single definition, different phenomena:**
  - Drop out experiences of students without being qualified
  - Not succeeded in the final examination
  - Not registered in the next level
- **Unable to capture where young people drop out from**
  - (lower or upper secondary education?) and the type of ET (general or VET?)

## What EU data tell us

**TARGET:** < 10%

**2015:** 11%

**2012:** 12.7%



Male



Female



Foreign-born



Native-born

Source: Education and Training monitor 2016

## What Cedefop found

- Experiencing dropout ≠ early leaving:
  - 58% of ELET are 'non-starters'
  - 42% have experienced a drop-out event
  - 1/3 of people with drop-out experience achieve upper-secondary qualification
  - Most of them achieve VET qualifications
- Still, the majority of those who drop out at one point **remain early leavers**



Icons: Freepik

## Factors leading to early leaving from VET

Difficulties related to health, well-being, social issues, poverty, etc.



Non-supportive family environment



Education underachievement

Students from migrant or ethnic minority origin being more frequently at risk of ELET



Students' inappropriate orientation

Inappropriate programme content and organisation



Negative self-perception linked to education failure

Lack of readiness to work



Difficult relationships in the workplace and in the classroom



Attraction of the labour market

## What is the situation in VET?



## VET: a story of contradictions

- Often higher rates of early leaving in VET than in general education (AT, BE, DK, NL, FR)

- The majority of those at risk of EL who shift to VET:

graduate

BE-Fr, FR, NL

- High participation in VET:

low drop out rates

LU, SI, CZ, NL,  
SK, HR, FI, AT, BE

- High incidence of apprenticeships:

lower rates of  
early leaving

DK, DE, CH, AT

## What makes policy makers and VET teachers and trainers to tackle ELET effectively?





# 1. Understanding learner's profile

Escapist



Frequently absent and not interested in education/training

Non-conformist



Frequently absent, poor education achievement, negative attitude to school

Lost in transition



Does not adapt to the requirements and expectations of the new programme

Resigned



Does not find a suitable place due to lack of required skills

Obligated



Decides to drop out for economic or family reasons

Marginalised



Accumulates disadvantage and challenges

## 2. Linking profiles to key features of measures

Escapist



Non-conformist



Lost in transition



Resigned



Obligated



Marginalised



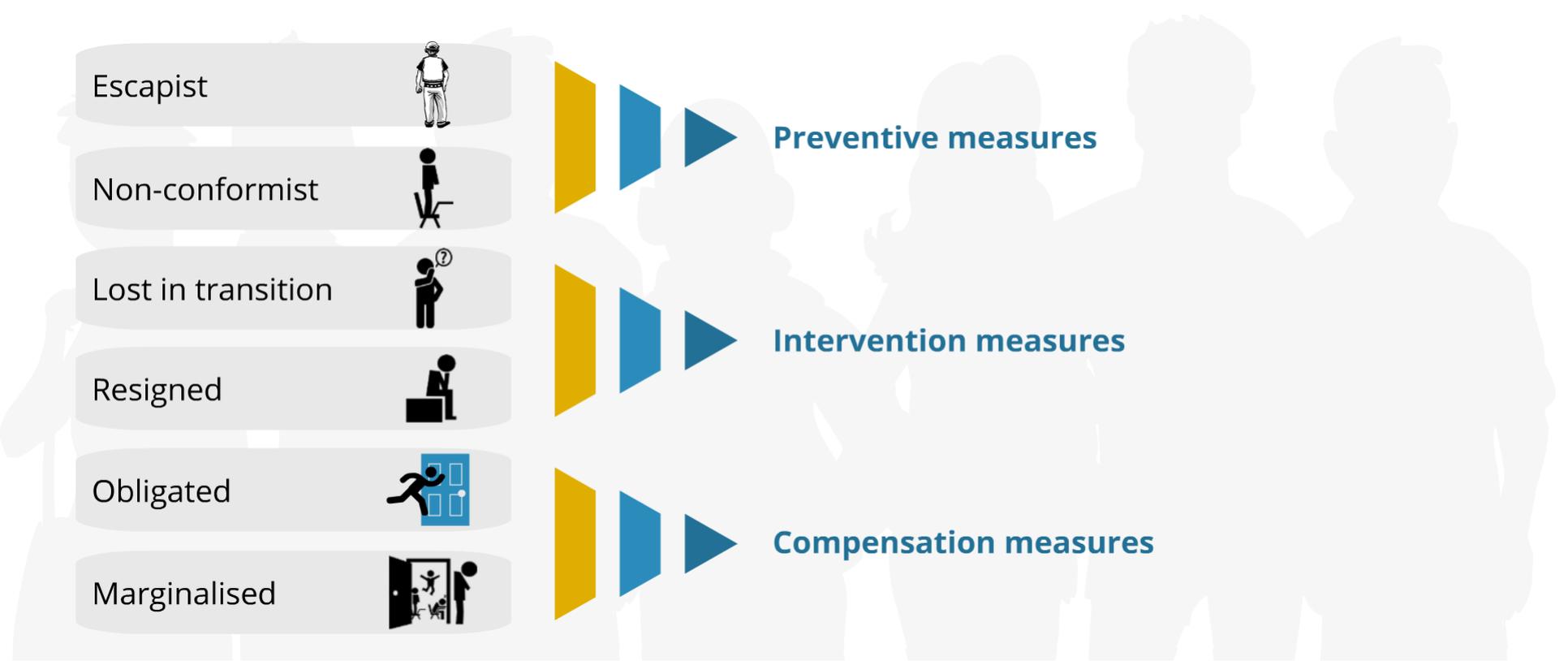
**Preventive measures**



**Intervention measures**



**Compensation measures**





### 3. Providing tailored responses to individual needs

Escapist



Non-conformist



Lost in transition



Resigned



Obligated



Marginalised



- Counselling, coaching and mentoring
- Parents' engagement
- Whole school approach
- Responsibilise and empower teachers and trainers



- Developing work readiness
- Individualised development and learning plan
- Developing social and communication skills
- Remediation support to learners in difficulty



- Training to upgrade basic skills
- Activities aimed at developing self-confidence, motivation and engagement
- Opportunities to transit to training/ apprenticeship
- Comprehensive support provided by multidisciplinary staff

## 4. Contributing to data collection and monitoring

- Detecting early the distress signs of learners at risk of dropping out
- Reaching out timely to those who have already left education

**Data on  
absenteeism**



**Persons no longer  
registered in ET**



**Apprenticeship  
contract dissolution**





## 5. Contributing to systematic evaluation

Indispensable to upscaling and mainstreaming successful projects and initiatives into national policies and measures

- Of the 337 VET related policies and initiatives analysed by Cedefop, 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

**LACK OF EVALUATION CULTURE  
IN EUROPE**

## How to (further) empower VET teachers and trainers?

- Ensuring long-term and sustainable support for the staff working on the ground
- Training VET teachers and in-company trainers to deal with ELVET
- Raising awareness on the importance of their role
- Establishing early warning systems to reach out to learners at risk of ELVET and involving teachers and trainers
- Giving them autonomy supported by guidelines and other tools



## Good practices



Where?	Who?	What?	How?
Tyrol, Austria	The local career center (AMG)	To improve the quality of apprenticeships	By organising a forum for trainers together with social partners
Germany, Spain, Italy, Austria and Portugal	The in-VET project, funded by the European Commission	To support VET professionals to detect students at risk of dropping out at an early stage	By developing web portal and tools for VET professionals
Brussels	A new apprentice-specific early warning service	To identify apprentices at risk of dropping out and provide solutions	By involving central services, teachers and employers
Hasselt, Flanders	The <i>COACH in het Kwadraat</i>	To support schools	By providing them with data on truancy to inform a school specific action plan
Hungary	The <i>Act on national public education</i>	To provide effective support to learners at risk of dropping out	By stipulating the launch of an early warning system complemented with pedagogical tools
The Netherlands	<i>The professionals working with Medical advice for sick-reported students (MASS)</i>	To support them in having absenteeism conversations with youngsters	By providing courses on absenteeism conversations for teachers and manual for teachers



## Tips for promoting 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

## 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 evaluation 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

Source: Cedefop Expert workshop results, 2015

# VET toolkit for tackling early leaving

Source of support to policy-makers and education and training providers

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- Home
- Identify
- Intervene
- Evaluate
- Best practices
- About the toolkit
- FAQs
- Contact the team

## What is the VET toolkit for tackling early leaving?

A Europe-wide toolkit inspired by successful VET practices in helping young people to attain at least an upper secondary qualification.

It provides practical guidance, tips, good practices and tools drawn from VET to feed into activities and policies aiming at:

- helping young people at risk of becoming early leavers to remain in education and training and qualify;
- helping early leavers to reintegrate into education or training and the labour market.

[Read more>](#)

 Good practices, tools and quick wins

 Get reflection tool for policy makers

 Contribute to this Toolkit: Submit your own good practices.

**COMING SOON!**

[Browse by action area](#)



**Identify**  
learners at risk of early leaving and those who already left



**Intervene**  
learners at risk of early leaving and those who already left



**Evaluate**  
the measures implemented