



Tackling Early Leaving

from Education and Training
in Europe

*Strategies,
Policies and Measures*

Eurydice and Cedefop Report

Education and
Training



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This document is published by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA, Education and Youth Policy Analysis).

Please cite this publication as:

European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Cedefop, 2014. *Tackling Early Leaving from Education and Training in Europe: Strategies, Policies and Measures*. Eurydice and Cedefop Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

ISBN 978-92-9201-637-1

doi:10.2797/33979

This document is also available on the Internet
(<http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice>).

Text completed in November 2014.

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CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----|
| Table of Figures | 4 |
| Codes, Abbreviations and Acronyms | 5 |
| Main Findings | 7 |
| Introduction | 17 |
| Chapter 1: Defining and Measuring Early Leaving from Education and Training | 21 |
| Chapter 2: Factors Contributing to Students Leaving the Education and Training System Early | 35 |
| Chapter 3: Strategies, Policies and Measures Against Early Leaving | 51 |
| Chapter 4: Governance and Cross-Sector Cooperation in the Area of Early Leaving | 67 |
| Chapter 5: The Role of Education and Career Guidance in Tackling Early Leaving | 81 |
| Chapter 6: Early Leaving from Vocational Education and Training | 103 |
| References | 127 |
| Glossary | 137 |
| National Information Sheets | 143 |
| Acknowledgements | 221 |

TABLE OF FIGURES

| | | |
|-------------|--|-----|
| Figure 1.1: | Percentage of early leavers from education and training, 2009-2013, and national targets as compared with the EU headline target | 24 |
| Figure 1.2: | National definitions of early leavers, 2013/14 | 27 |
| Figure 1.3: | Sources used for production of national data on early leaving (other than Eurostat LFS), 2013/14 | 28 |
| Figure 1.4: | Level of ELET data aggregation, 2013/14 | 30 |
| Figure 1.5: | ELET data coverage, 2013/14 | 32 |
| Figure 1.6: | Frequency of ELET data analysis, 2013/14 | 33 |
| Figure 1.7: | Publication of ELET data, 2013/14 | 34 |
| Figure 2.1: | Percentage of children (aged 0-17) at risk of poverty or social exclusion by highest education level of their parents (1997 ISCED 0-2, 3-4 and 5-6), 2013 | 37 |
| Figure 2.2: | Percentage of early leavers from education and training by origin (foreign-born and native), 2013 | 39 |
| Figure 2.3: | Percentage of early leavers from education and training by sex, 2013 | 41 |
| Figure 2.4: | Percentage of students reporting that they have repeated a grade at least once in primary, lower secondary or upper secondary school, PISA 2012 | 44 |
| Figure 2.5: | Percentage of students reporting that they had attended pre-primary education (ISCED 0), for more than one year, PISA 2012 | 47 |
| Figure 2.6: | Employment rates of 15-24 year olds by levels of education (2011 ISCED 0-2, 3-4 and 5-8), 2013 | 49 |
| Figure 3.1: | Strategies for tackling early leaving from education and training, 2013/14 | 53 |
| Figure 3.2: | Policies and measures for tackling or contributing to reducing ELET, 2013/14 | 57 |
| Figure 3.3: | Targeting groups at a high risk of leaving education and training early, 2013/14 | 64 |
| Figure 4.1: | Cross-government cooperation on ELET: policy areas working with education at central/top-level, 2013/14 | 68 |
| Figure 4.2: | Creation of a central/top-level coordinating body to tackle ELET, 2013/14 | 71 |
| Figure 4.3: | Professionals involved in tackling ELET at school and community level, 2013/14 | 73 |
| Figure 4.4: | Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of cooperation in tackling ELET, 2013/14 | 76 |
| Figure 5.1: | Education and career guidance as a prevention and/or intervention measure for addressing ELET in primary and general secondary education, 2013/14 | 83 |
| Figure 5.2: | Provision of education and career guidance in primary and general secondary education (ISCED 1, 2 and 3), 2013/14 | 86 |
| Figure 5.3: | Main objectives for education and career guidance in primary and general secondary education, 2013/14 | 88 |
| Figure 5.4: | Education and career guidance taught as a compulsory topic, by age, according to top-level steering documents for primary and general secondary education, 2013/14 | 91 |
| Figure 5.5: | School staff responsible for education and career guidance at primary (ISCED 1), general lower secondary (ISCED 2) and general upper secondary education (ISCED 3) levels, 2013/14 | 96 |
| Figure 5.6: | Education and career guidance as a compensation measure to tackle ELET, 2013/14 | 101 |
| Figure 6.1: | Summary of alternative indicators used to understand ELVET in selected countries | 105 |
| Figure 6.2: | Drop-outs can be seen as a subset of early leavers within a given youth population | 108 |
| Figure 6.3: | Early leaving and drop-out rates among young people (16-29), 2012 | 109 |
| Figure 6.4: | Young drop-outs who went on to achieve a sufficient educational attainment, 2012 (%) | 110 |
| Figure 6.5: | Graduates in upper secondary VET as a share of all graduates from upper secondary education, 2012 | 112 |
| Figure 6.6: | Cluster analysis of the role of VET in avoiding ELET | 113 |
| Figure 6.7: | Participation of (non-western) migrant (and ethnic minority) students in VET in selected countries and their chances to drop out | 114 |
| Figure 6.8: | Map of measures to address early leaving from VET | 120 |

CODES, ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

Country codes

| | | | |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------------|
| EU/EU-28 | European Union | NL | The Netherlands |
| BE | Belgium | AT | Austria |
| BE fr | Belgium – French Community | PL | Poland |
| BE de | Belgium – German-speaking Community | PT | Portugal |
| BE nl | Belgium – Flemish Community | RO | Romania |
| BG | Bulgaria | SI | Slovenia |
| CZ | Czech Republic | SK | Slovakia |
| DK | Denmark | FI | Finland |
| DE | Germany | SE | Sweden |
| EE | Estonia | UK | The United Kingdom |
| IE | Ireland | UK-ENG | England |
| EL | Greece | UK-WLS | Wales |
| ES | Spain | UK-NIR | Northern Ireland |
| FR | France | UK-SCT | Scotland |
| HR | Croatia | CH | Switzerland |
| IT | Italy | IS | Iceland |
| CY | Cyprus | LI | Liechtenstein |
| LV | Latvia | ME | Montenegro |
| LT | Lithuania | MK* | former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia |
| LU | Luxembourg | NO | Norway |
| HU | Hungary | RS | Serbia |
| MT | Malta | TR | Turkey |

* ISO code 3166. Provisional code which does not prejudice in any way the definitive nomenclature for this country, which will be agreed following the conclusion of negotiations currently taking place on this subject at the United Nations (http://www.iso.org/iso/country_codes/iso_3166_code_lists.htm [accessed 25.9.2014]).

Statistical codes

| | | | |
|---|--------------------|-----|----------------|
| : | Data not available | (-) | Not applicable |
|---|--------------------|-----|----------------|

Abbreviations and acronyms

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| AES | Adult Education Survey (Eurostat) |
| BIBB | Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (<i>Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung</i>) |
| Cedefop | European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training |
| CVET | Continuing vocational education and training |
| ELET | Early leaving from education and training |
| ELVET | Early leaving from vocational education and training |
| Eurostat | Statistical Office of the European Union |
| EU-LFS | European Labour Force Survey (Eurostat) |
| EU-SILC | European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (Eurostat) |
| IEA | International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement |
| ISCED | International Standard Classification of Education |
| IVET | Initial vocational education and training |
| LLP | Lifelong Learning Programme |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| PIAAC | Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (OECD) |
| PIRLS | Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (IEA) |
| PISA | Programme for International Student Assessment (OECD) |
| PUM | Project learning for young adults |
| TALIS | Teaching and Learning International Survey (OECD) |
| UOE | Unesco/OECD/Eurostat |
| VET | Vocational education and training |

MAIN FINDINGS

This report looks at the subject of early leaving from education and training (ELET) from different angles, providing an overview of some of the main issues involved. It highlights the high costs for society of students leaving education and training early as well as the consequences for the individual. A higher level of education, on the other hand, can lead to a series of positive outcomes for the individual as well as society related to employment, higher salaries, better health, less crime, higher social cohesion, lower public and social costs and higher productivity and growth.

European countries have committed to reducing the proportion of early leavers to less than 10 % by 2020 ⁽¹⁾. In June 2011, education ministers agreed on a 'framework for coherent, comprehensive, and evidence-based policies' to tackle early leaving ⁽²⁾. And since then a working group bringing together policy makers and practitioners from across Europe has looked at examples of good practice across Europe and has promoted an exchange of experiences on this issue ⁽³⁾. Last but not least, in the context of the European Semester, country specific recommendations issued to some Member States identify reducing early leaving as a policy priority area ⁽⁴⁾.

The report should be seen in this policy context. It aims to add value to Member States' individual efforts as well as to the European Commission's endeavours in this area by monitoring developments in the design and implementation of evidence-based and comprehensive strategies to combat early leaving and support student learning. As this report is a joint Eurydice/Cedefop publication, the first five chapters have a main focus on general education, whereas the last chapter looks in greater detail at early leaving from the perspective of vocational education and training (ELVET). This summary provides a synopsis of the main findings by chapter.

The analysis shows that the factors related to early leaving are closely intertwined with other educational and social issues, and it is hardly possible to discuss all of them in one report. It is fair to say that all the issues examined in this publication can be further expanded on, and therefore this report provides only a glimpse of the state of play in national efforts to address early leaving.

The report confirms that early leaving represents a complex challenge at individual, national and European levels. Young people who leave education and training early are often both socially and economically disadvantaged compared to those who stay on and gain the necessary qualifications to help them succeed in life. To address this situation it is vital to recognise that while early leaving is, on the surface, an issue for education and training systems, its underlying causes are embedded in wider social and political contexts. Early leaving is fundamentally shaped by countries' broader policies for the economy, employment, social affairs, health and so on. Improvements in educational attainment and employment levels of young people therefore also rely on improvements in the socio-economic climate – on higher economic growth, measures to combat poverty and improve health, and the effective integration of migrants and minorities into society. Only a comprehensive approach to tackling early leaving, therefore, can be effective and sustainable.

Monitoring early leaving from education and training

There is general agreement that valid and up-to-date data on early leavers can help to develop focused policies. The most recent Eurostat data, presented in chapter 1, shows that in the majority of European countries the rate of early leavers has decreased over the last years, and EU countries are collectively heading towards the benchmark goal by 2020 if the current trend continues. More than half

⁽¹⁾ [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52009XG0528\(01\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52009XG0528(01)&from=EN)

⁽²⁾ Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving, OJ C 191, 1.7.2011. (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2011:191:0001:0006:en:PDF>).

⁽³⁾ http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/expert-groups_en.htm#schools

⁽⁴⁾ http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/making-it-happen/country-specific-recommendations/index_en.htm

of the countries examined have reached the headline target of less than 10 % early leaving, and around one third of all countries have reached their own national targets, often set at a more ambitious level than the EU headline target. Some countries such as Spain, Malta and Portugal, despite having rates above 10 %, have made significant improvements over the last years. In order to achieve the target, all countries which still have relatively high rates of early leavers need to maintain the pace of change in the coming years, and those that have seen an increase in their rates should redouble their efforts to reverse this trend.

Most countries have developed their own national definition of early leavers, in addition to the EU definition, that frames the policy debate of the country in this area and forms the basis of specific national data collections. The Czech Republic, Cyprus, Latvia, Hungary, Malta, Romania and Slovakia are the only countries where the EU definition is the main one used to describe ELET.

The findings in chapter 1 show that all countries/regions, except for Belgium (German-speaking Community), Czech Republic, Croatia, Cyprus, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland), have national data collections on early leaving, in addition to the data gathered for the EU Labour Force Survey. In most of them, data collections are based on student registers or databases. Although these may not have been developed with the objective of measuring early leaving, they can be used to monitor absenteeism and thereby provide an early warning system to alert schools and authorities when to intervene to help individuals at risk of early leaving. They can also be used to evaluate the effectiveness of policies to address the challenge of early leaving. However, the report shows that across most European countries, analyses of early leaving are based on data aggregated at the top/national level, and in only around half of them based on data aggregated at local and school level, making it difficult to obtain a picture of the specific situation in local communities and schools. Moreover, the majority of countries carry out data analysis only once a year, which may not be enough to monitor the current situation and/or the impact of on-going measures.

Finally, although many countries produce statistical data on early leavers, relatively few of them gather qualitative information that can help understanding the reasons why students leave education and training early and what they do afterwards. France, Malta and the United Kingdom (Scotland) are amongst those few countries that routinely conduct surveys of students after they have left education and training prematurely. However, hearing the views of the students affected, or those of the other stakeholders involved, may provide an important source of information for on-going measures or for future policy debate relating to early leaving.

Factors contributing to early leaving

Leaving education and training early is a complex issue and the causes vary from student to student. The second chapter of the report shows that family and/or migrant background, gender and socio-economic circumstances as well as factors related to the education and training system are only some of the elements implicated to a greater or lesser extent in the process leading students to leave education and training early.

Statistically, students who are born abroad, young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and males are more prone to early leaving than other groups. As far as gender is concerned, the figures show that boys are over-represented amongst early leavers in general education. However, the higher the socio-economic status of students, the less apparent is the difference in the rates of early leaving between the genders.

Statistics also show that foreign-born students are more likely to leave education and training early. Indeed, students with a migrant background generally face greater challenges in accessing and participating in education than those born in the country of residence. This can be due to language and/or cultural barriers, socio-economic segregation, limited access to sufficient learning support, etc. However, it is important to keep in mind that data on migrant populations inherently have their limitations. Data on foreign-born early leavers supplied to Eurostat by the national statistical authorities have low reliability for twelve countries, and for eleven other countries the most recent data is not available because of a very small sample size. Therefore, the numbers of foreign-born early leavers are inaccurate in these countries, and this is without even mentioning non-registered/irregular migration, which is impossible to account for. Finally, there are no comparable data available for second generation migrants at EU level.

As shown by this report, coming from a migrant/minority background or being a male should not be seen as defining factors with respect to early leaving. The socio-economic situation of students appears to exert the stronger influence on the probability of leaving education and training early than other factors. Difficult family situations such as unemployment, low household income and low levels of parental education, can have a direct and lasting effect on students' school career, their attitudes towards learning, their educational achievement; and this can consequently lead to their decision to leave education and training early. This is also one of the main reasons why cross-government and cross-sector cooperation to ensure the coordination of the different services supporting the multiple needs of disadvantaged families is so crucial (see Chapter 4).

A number of factors relating to the education system that influence early leaving rates have also been discussed in chapter 2. The negative aspects include grade retention, the socio-economic segregation of schools and early tracking based on academic selection. However, there are also positive factors that can lower the risk of early leaving, such as participation in high quality early childhood education and care and well-managed transition processes from primary to secondary level, and lower to upper secondary level, and from school to work. Flexible pathways in upper secondary education can also have a positive effect in preventing or reducing early leaving. Finally, factors such as local labour market conditions can act as 'pull' or 'push' factors in the early leaving process, which highlights the complex relationship of the early leaving phenomenon with employment. It also underlines the important role of education and career guidance in supporting students to make appropriate choices for themselves (see Chapter 5).

Strategies, policies and measures against early leaving

As shown in chapter 3, across Europe, around a third of countries/regions ⁽⁵⁾ have a national strategy in place that has as one objective to reduce early leaving from education or training, or they are in the process of adopting one. In six countries/regions – Belgium (Flemish Community), Bulgaria, Spain, Malta, the Netherlands and Austria – they correspond closely to the concept of a comprehensive strategy as defined by the Recommendation of the Education Council. In the other countries they have been developed independent of it. Nevertheless, they all cover some of the most important characteristics of a comprehensive strategy, such as a focus on monitoring early leaving, prevention, intervention and compensation measures as well as cross-sector cooperation.

The breadth of the approach is crucial in effectively combating early leaving. The report shows that strategies should be all-inclusive, addressing the multiple and interrelated factors leading to student

⁽⁵⁾ Belgium (Flemish Community), Bulgaria, Germany, Ireland, Spain, Malta, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Romania, the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) and Norway

disengagement that ultimately lead young people to leave education and training early. At the same time, countries are putting emphasis on the most immediate and pressing national concerns, as for example, in Belgium (Flemish Community), Malta and the Netherlands where the comprehensive strategies have a strong focus on prevention measures or in Austria where compensation measures are a central element.

Some challenges have also been reported by countries in establishing an effective strategy, such as: ensuring collaboration between different policy areas and stakeholders and, in particular, in encouraging schools to link with outside bodies or agencies (Ireland); adapting strategies to the different socio-economic circumstances or to the disparities between early leaving rates in regions or localities within the country (Spain); and creating sustainable structures that can guarantee the continuity of actions when the term of the strategy comes to an end (Norway).

Finally, the Recommendation of the Education Council on comprehensive policies to reduce early leaving emphasises that the effectiveness and efficiency of any strategic action should be rigorously evaluated to inform progress and future developments. An example of this can be found in Belgium (Flemish Community) where evaluation is an umbrella action across the whole strategy.

While not all European countries have a national strategy, they all have policies and measures to combat early leaving, which, in many cases, give equal weight to the three types of measure mentioned in the Recommendation i.e. prevention, intervention and compensation. This report makes a distinction between the recent policies/measures that have been developed specifically to tackle early leaving, and general, on-going policies/measures that are neither part of a comprehensive strategy or been introduced to address this issue specifically, but can nevertheless contribute to eliminating it. This distinction is used to highlight which reforms affecting the issue of early leaving are recent and which are longstanding. Countries such as the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia, for example, have long-standing, general policies/measures, so this may partly explain why they traditionally have low rates of students leaving education and training early.

The areas where most countries have policies/measures in place that contribute to reducing early leaving are: improving access to and the quality of ECEC, and increasing the flexibility and permeability of educational pathways. As the analysis of factors that have an impact on early leaving has shown, actions in both areas are essential in tackling it. Education and career guidance is another area that has been reported by the majority of countries as an essential measure to combat early leaving (see Chapter 5). In contrast, few countries/regions have recent or on-going policies in place to reduce grade retention⁽⁶⁾ or restrict socio-economic segregation in schools⁽⁷⁾. Not all European countries are equally concerned by these issues. Regarding grade retention, for example, the findings presented in chapter 2, reveal lots of variation between countries in their rates of students who have repeated at least one school year. However, as the report's analysis has shown, both grade retention and school segregation represent some of the main obstacles for making progress in tackling early leaving and should therefore receive adequate attention in all countries where they could be problematic. Similarly, less than a third of all countries/regions mention that the subject of early leaving is part of recent or on-going policies on initial teacher education or continuing professional development⁽⁸⁾. However, one of the determining factors in reducing early leaving is improving teachers' ability to identify individual students' learning needs, create a positive learning environment

⁽⁶⁾ Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), the Czech Republic, France, Latvia, Austria, Portugal, Romania and Slovenia

⁽⁷⁾ Belgium (French Community), Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Malta and Romania

⁽⁸⁾ Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), Spain, Luxembourg, Hungary, Portugal, Romania, Switzerland and Norway

and promote inclusion. Likewise, the school heads' awareness of the problem of early leaving and commitment to addressing it is essential to make improvements in this area.

Furthermore, the report shows that all countries have policies/measures targeting groups at high risk of early leaving, such as disadvantaged students, those from a migrant or minority (especially Roma) background and students with special educational needs. Even though the policies/measures targeting these groups may not have all been specifically developed to tackling early leaving, but are rather intended to improve attainment levels more generally among these students, they are still in line with the Recommendations of the Education Council on early leaving.

Education and career guidance as a key measure against early leaving

Education and career guidance, considered in chapter 5 of this report as a practice to support students' choice of education and career path, has been identified by the large majority of European countries as one of the key measures to address early leaving. In most of them, guidance is an important element in prevention, intervention and compensation activities.

It is a common practice of education systems, even where guidance is not seen as a measure to tackle early leaving, to include guidance as a general aim and principle of the educational process, and schools are attributed a primary role in guidance provision. The main objectives of guidance include providing students with support, informing them about the choices open to them and developing the skills they need to make decisions about future education and work.

The analysis shows that in most countries, education and career guidance is addressed mainly to secondary students; in 16 countries/regions, it is not offered by schools at primary level⁽⁹⁾. It is, nevertheless, important that children are guided and supported from the early years to be able to develop their aspirations and be supported in their educational choices.

Education and career guidance is traditionally delivered through school-based guidance services, which often deal with individuals who are in need of support or may already be at risk of leaving education and training early. However, a great number of countries are now including guidance in the curriculum. This arrangement makes it accessible to all students and supports its use as a prevention measure. Both forms of provision have therefore important functions for making guidance a more effective tool for addressing early leaving.

Where education and career guidance is included in the curriculum, three main approaches are used in the classroom: it may be taught as a separate subject; integrated within one or more subjects (social sciences, entrepreneurship or citizenship education); or distributed throughout the curriculum as a cross-curricular topic. European countries report that they suggest a broad approach to education and career guidance, which links the different forms of provision and uses a wide range of methods. In this perspective, schools in most countries organise guidance also through extra-curricular activities.

The type of staff responsible for guidance provision is directly related to the way guidance is organised in schools. Where guidance is an integral part of the curriculum, it is mainly delivered by teachers. Where it is provided by school-based services, guidance specialists such as guidance counsellors, psychologists or social workers are usually in charge. The great majority of European countries report that it is non-specialised teachers who play the most significant role in the provision of guidance, independent of its form. Accordingly, a number of countries/regions report a lack of high quality

⁽⁹⁾ Belgium (French Community), Germany, Ireland, Greece, France, Croatia, Cyprus, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Sweden, the United Kingdom (England and Wales), Norway, Switzerland and Turkey

guidance⁽¹⁰⁾. This is confirmed by findings from the OECD's TALIS survey showing that around 42 % of European teachers need professional development in student career guidance and counselling. Moreover, only a third of countries report that the staff responsible for guidance receive training during their initial education in the skills needed to deal with the groups at risk of early leaving⁽¹¹⁾. In order to guarantee high quality guidance services for this particular at-risk group, schools could further investigate the need for appropriate professional training opportunities.

Finally, education and career guidance also plays an important role for those who have already left education and wish to re-enter the system. The report demonstrates that most European countries consider guidance to be a compensation measure and an essential part of the policies to provide opportunities for early leavers. Thus, guidance is delivered mainly through second-chance education programmes or at the point when students re-enter mainstream education. It is also offered by specialist guidance services, through youth guarantees, and in some cases it is project-based.

Why cross-government and cross-sector cooperation is essential

Reducing early leaving requires strong governance arrangements to manage the relationships across the relevant policy areas ('horizontal cooperation') as well as between national, regional, local and school levels ('vertical cooperation').

Chapter 4 shows that cooperation on policies/measures related to early leaving between the various ministries/departments or between the different policy areas is already part of the institutional set-up in many countries. In others, cooperation is less systematic. The level and extent of this kind of cooperation depends a lot on countries' political and institutional structures. Enhancing cooperation at central/top level and between various policy areas is key to ensuring the development and implementation of successful measures to combat early leaving.

Formalising cooperation, for example, by means of a coordinating body, is a way to enhance synergies across government departments and between different levels of authority, schools and other stakeholders. Coordinating bodies could strengthen the commitment to reducing early leaving, improve the process of monitoring and evaluation as well as identification of areas for further work. Although, only four countries/regions have established a formal coordinating body as part of their comprehensive strategy for tackling early leaving (Belgium (Flemish Community), Spain, Malta and the Netherlands), the reported initial positive outcomes of their work could serve as an example for other countries.

Multi-agency partnerships can facilitate effective coordination among local stakeholders who work together to address the basic needs of individual students at risk of early leaving; they can therefore provide holistic support to these young people. In many countries various professionals are involved at school and community level. The question that remains to be answered is to what extent these agencies really work together; do they provide a joined-up service or do they provide a fragmented approach, with professionals only responding to students needs if they fall within their own area of expertise. Experiences from Belgium (German Community), Ireland, Malta and the Netherlands, for example, show that the constitution of multi-disciplinary teams committed to joint case management can be effective for meeting students' full range of needs.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Bulgaria, Latvia, Portugal, Romania, the United Kingdom (England) and Turkey

⁽¹¹⁾ Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Spain, Italy, Cyprus, Malta, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden, Finland, Switzerland and Iceland

Effective cross-government and cross-sector cooperation requires clearly defined roles and responsibilities for the various stakeholders. Although, monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of cooperation can help to clarify these issues and support collaboration, this currently only happens in a systematic way in the Netherlands, Finland, the United Kingdom (Scotland) and Switzerland. The findings in these countries/regions show that a lot of time and effort needs to go into developing knowledge and understanding of other partners (institutional culture, language, practices, etc.) as well as into building trust to overcome barriers to cooperation. This process is a prerequisite if a sense of shared ownership is to be developed.

Cooperation between the different policy areas and stakeholders is also a key element of the youth guarantee schemes and similar programmes. In Finland, for example, an evaluation of the implementation of the youth guarantee, bringing together the main actions to combat early leaving, shows that a multi-professional approach and multi-sector cooperation has helped to improve the planning of services to better meet young people's needs. In this sense, youth guarantees may serve as an example for strengthening cooperation between the stakeholders involved in the strategies, policies and measures to tackle early leaving.

The role of VET in tackling early leaving

In chapter 6 of this report, the issue of early leaving is investigated also through the lenses of the specific phenomenon of early leaving from vocational education and training (ELVET). Understanding the role of VET in reducing early leaving implies analysing both the dropout phenomenon and the potential of VET to attract, retain and reintegrate young people in education and training. Both aspects represent innovative and challenging areas of investigation.

There is no common measure of ELVET currently available across Europe. The currently available underlying data behind the EU indicator on early leaving does not allow for a breakdown by the type of programme from which young people have left prematurely, whether this is from VET or otherwise. To better understand the phenomenon, many European countries employ a range of other approaches to data collection in order to prevent and remedy early leaving. Two main alternative indicators are used. First, measures of the non-retention (or non-completion) of students are used to provide information on the level and rate of ELVET. Second, reflecting labour market concerns of having a qualified workforce, indicators of non-attainment of a certain qualification are adopted in many countries/regions to capture the proportion of the student population that has failed to obtain the relevant VET certificate.

One piece of evidence from the available data is that countries with a relatively weak VET system tend to have a higher problem of early leaving, likely due to the lack of sufficiently attractive non-academic programmes. In addition, the analysis of national measurements suggests possible discrepancies between those that drop-out to change course or school, and those leaving education and training altogether. Cedefop estimates based on the OECD-PIAAC dataset support the view that VET can play a key role in facilitating alternative pathways and re-entry into education and training. Indeed, almost 30 % of the young people who have unfinished qualifications at upper secondary level would not be classified as early leavers because they either: (a) had already attained an upper secondary qualification (12.6 %); or subsequently went on to attain an upper secondary qualification (16.3 %). Of those young drop-outs that go on to achieve upper secondary education (or higher), roughly 1 in 4 (24 %) went on to achieve sufficient educational attainment. Of these, 62 % achieved this through VET.

When it comes to policies, analysis shows a large number of different approaches and styles countries have adopted to address early leaving from VET. One of the uniting features is the ever-growing

recognition of the need to ensure individualised pathways for VET students. A student-centred, individualised approach to learning, for example through 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 also as a way of preventing the incident of ELVET. The competence-based approach is another characteristic endorsed by ELVET policies. The emphasis on what learners can do as a result of training (outcome) rather than on the number of courses/hours of learning they have undertaken (inputs) is particularly important for early leaving actions in VET.

VET in itself is considered to be a measure in the ELET arena, not least because many early leavers from both general and vocational education choose VET if/when they return to learning. Thus VET systems accommodate large numbers of learners who have either dropped out or decided to change their studies from one course, provider or type of learning to another. Of course, VET is typically chosen by young people who prefer VET specific pedagogies as a way of learning, such as work-based learning and other kinetic and labour market focussed pedagogies. Thus VET pedagogies indeed have a central role in the area of early leaving even if VET in itself does not always get the attention that it needs and deserves in national/regional early leaving strategies.

A number of success factors and challenges for EVET policies have been identified in this context. First, ELVET should be addressed through a combination of individual, school and system specific actions, requiring both early leaving specific measures and broader VET improvement policies. A greater coordination and collaboration among bodies, schools and relevant agencies can largely improve cost-efficiency of ELVET policies, reducing duplication of activities, conflicting or competing policies and fragmented responsibility.

Second, early leaving has been centred on 'second chance' and 'catch up' programmes for a long time, while addressing disengagement at the earliest stages possible is crucial for successful policies. In particular, the most effective preventive approach is one that is based on a concept of a continuous support, starting from the early intervention, continuing throughout studies and includes follow up in case of truancy, drop out and transition. Targeted case management is particularly successful when it comes to students who are at risk of dropping out of a VET school/college or at risk of leaving an apprenticeship prematurely.

There is evidence of under-investment in ELVET policies especially in comparison to the general education sector even if the VET sector in most countries hosts a much larger share of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. In particular, evidence suggests the importance of investing (i) on improving the skills and capabilities of VET teachers and trainers to identify at risk students, and (ii) on enhancing the employability skills of VET students before sending them to placements.

Finally, the lack of data and long-term follow-up on the effectiveness of different VET measures means that it can be extremely difficult to assess what type of ELVET measures work 'better' than others. Capacity building, knowledge of 'what works', and thereby the capacity to select and prioritise measures are three strategic features of successful ELVET policies.

Conclusion and further issues to explore

A look across all the topics covered in this report confirms that the issue of early leaving from education and training is highly complex. In fact, there is no single factor that can explain the variations between countries' rates of early leavers.

Positive developments can be noted in the progress made across all European countries in reducing the proportion of early leavers. Countries like Spain, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Romania, with high rates of early leavers (above the headline target), have developed a strategy and/or a coordination body for tackling early leaving in recent years. In parallel, three of these countries have recently made significant improvements.

Furthermore, all countries have in place a wide range of recent and on-going policies and measures for tackling early leaving, even the ones with very low early leaving rates. It is obvious, however, that certain things can be further improved. In some countries, large disparities still exist between the early leaving rates of migrant and non-migrant students as well as between male and female students, even though both migrant background and gender are not determining factors for early leaving but socio-economic status has a much stronger impact. Moreover, high levels of grade retention and low participation rates in ECEC coincide in a few countries, such as Spain, Portugal and Turkey, with high proportions of early leavers, and this is one reason why these issues remain a general concern.

In addition to the issues identified and analysed in this report, countries have reported several other factors that may have had an impact on their rates of early leavers, such as the implementation and generalisation of VET programmes in secondary education; the identification of schools needing priority intervention; the extension of compulsory schooling; and the creation of a national expectation that young people should finish school. These issues could not all be analysed in detail in this report, however, they do deserve further investigation.

School autonomy is another issue to be further explored with regard to early leaving. Looking at Eurydice (2012) data on school autonomy in selecting new teachers, it appears that, in contrast to countries with low early leaving rates, a number of those with high rates have no autonomy in this area. This may hinder them in selecting highly qualified teachers who are committed to the schools' aims and objectives, including tackling early leaving. But there are also many other factors related to autonomy, for example, the freedom of schools to determine the curriculum content of optional subjects as well as the opportunities students have to select the subjects that interest them in secondary education. Needless to say, school autonomy can only be beneficial for addressing early leaving if it allows educational content and processes to be better adapted to students' needs.

Last but not least, the funding of policies and measures for tackling early leaving has only been briefly discussed here. What the report shows is that the availability of additional funding is not a prerequisite for strategic action to address early leaving. However, it can act as a lever, for example in the case of the Netherlands where schools receive performance-related funding for contributing to the reduction of early leaving. Therefore this issue, too, is one that should be further explored in future debates on strategies, policies and measures to tackle early leaving in Europe.

INTRODUCTION

Early leaving from education and training (ELET) is a serious issue in many EU countries and has attracted the attention of many researchers, policy-makers and educators. Although the situation varies across countries and the underlying reasons for students leaving early are highly individual, the process leading up to it includes a number of common elements: learning difficulties, socio-economic problems, or a lack of motivation, guidance or support.

Early leaving is highly challenging, not only for young people, but also for societies. For many, early leaving will lead to reduced opportunities in the labour market and an increased likelihood of unemployment, poverty, health problems and reduced participation in political, social and cultural activities. Furthermore, these negative consequences have an impact on the next generation and may perpetuate the occurrence of early leaving.

Education and training systems play a crucial role in addressing early leaving from education and training. They must attempt to cater for the diverse needs of young people today. Dealing with the underlying causes of early leaving has thus become a central issue across Europe. EU countries have committed to reducing the proportion of early leavers to less than 10 % by 2020 ⁽¹⁾. In June 2011, education ministers agreed on a 'framework for coherent, comprehensive, and evidence-based policies' to tackle early leaving ⁽²⁾. And since then a working group bringing together policy makers and practitioners from across Europe has looked at examples of good practice across Europe and has promoted an exchange of experiences on this issue ⁽³⁾. Last but not least, in the context of the European Semester, country specific recommendations issued to some Member States identify reducing early leaving as a policy priority area ⁽⁴⁾.

The report should be seen in this policy context. It supports the Europe 2020 agenda on reducing early leaving from education and is a direct follow-up to the Council recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving. It aims to add value to Member States' individual efforts as well as to the European Commission's endeavours in this area by monitoring developments in the design and implementation of evidence-based and comprehensive strategies to combat early leaving and support student learning. The most recent initiatives at national and sub-national levels will also be highlighted in the report. The report builds on the work already done by the Commission's working group, in particular its final report on 'Reducing early school leaving' ⁽⁵⁾.

Objectives and scope of the report

The report provides an up-to-date picture of the recent policies and measures implemented in European countries related to reducing early leaving from education and training. In this report, the term early leaving from education and training is used rather than early school leaving, in accordance with the terminology currently used by Eurostat. It refers to all forms of leaving not only schools but also vocational education and training before the end of upper secondary level.

Several key areas are addressed in the report: data collection and monitoring, strategies and policies against early leaving focusing on prevention, intervention and compensation and including appropriate measures targeting groups at increased risk of early leaving, and governance and cross-sector cooperation. As the availability of high quality education and career guidance has been identified by the majority of European countries as an essential measure for tackling early leaving, the report

⁽¹⁾ [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52009XG0528\(01\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52009XG0528(01)&from=EN)

⁽²⁾ Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving, OJ C 191, 1.7.2011. (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2011:191:0001:0006:en:PDF>).

⁽³⁾ http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/expert-groups_en.htm#schools

⁽⁴⁾ http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/making-it-happen/country-specific-recommendations/index_en.htm

⁽⁵⁾ http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/doc/esl-group-report_en.pdf

provides an extensive mapping of its status in curricula for primary and secondary education. It also highlights the role of education and career guidance in measures for prevention, intervention and compensation.

This report is a joint Eurydice/Cedefop publication. While chapters 1 to 5 have a main focus on general education, chapter 6 looks in greater detail at early leaving from the perspective of vocational education and training (ELVET). It analyses the problem of dropout from VET as well as the potential of VET to attract, retain and reintegrate young people into education and training. While many of the fundamental issues in relation to early leaving are similar in both general education and VET, the scale of these issues can vary between the two sectors and there are also some challenges that are specific to vocational programmes.

Structure

The report consists of six chapters:

Chapter 1: Defining and measuring early leaving from education and training

Chapter 2: Factors contributing to students leaving the education and training system early

Chapter 3: Strategies, policies and measures against early leaving

Chapter 4: Governance and cross-sector cooperation in the area of early leaving

Chapter 5: The role of education and career guidance in tackling early leaving

Chapter 6: Early leaving from vocational education and training

The subsequent national information sheets provide a concise overview of some important aspects related to early leaving from general education and from vocational education and training. The information is structured around six topics:

- ELET rate and national target
- Definition(s)
- National data collection
- Strategy, policies and measures
- Cross-sector cooperation
- Education and career guidance

The glossary at the end of the report defines all the specific terms used in the report.

Methodology

Eurydice chapters

Chapters 1-5 of the report were drafted by Eurydice, and they cover public schools in all countries. Private schools are not included, except for grant-aided private schools in the small number of countries where such schools enrol a large proportion of students, namely Belgium, Ireland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom (England).

The reference year for the information is 2013/14. All EU Members States are covered as well as Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey.

Three sources of information were used to compile chapters 1-5: questionnaires administered through the Eurydice network, research literature and statistical data.

1. The questionnaires on early leaving strategies, policies and measures in European countries/regions were completed by national experts and/or the national representative of the Eurydice network. The responses were largely based on official documents issued by central/top level education authorities.

Given the nature of the topic, the policies and measures concerning compulsory and post-compulsory school systems (ISCED 1, 2 and 3) have been considered. Taking into account the 'preventive' nature of some of the measures, policies concerned with early childhood education and care (ISCED 0) have also been taken into account where relevant.

2. Research literature was analysed to provide insights into the causes of early leaving, its effects and possible remedies. The literature review is not exhaustive, but presents some of the most widely cited papers, largely but not exclusively, in the English language. The report of the Commission's working group was instrumental in establishing a framework for the most effective strategies and approaches to combat early leaving.

3. The statistics on early leaving from education and training as well as other related subjects are mainly based on data from Eurostat's Labour Force Survey (LFS) and the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) as well as data from OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA, 2012).

Cedefop chapter

The chapter by Cedefop (the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training) is based on preliminary results from an on-going study on 'The role of VET in reducing early leaving from education and training' initiated by Cedefop in 2013⁽⁶⁾. The full study will be published in 2016. The methodology combines the following elements:

1. A secondary analysis of the Eurostat Adult Education Survey (AES) and OECD's Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) micro-data.

The AES and PIAAC international surveys contain variables on dropping out from education and training. These variables were used to construct more detailed indicators about the phenomenon of early leaving than the EU indicator based on the Labour Force Survey.

The PIAAC dataset allows a distinction to be made between the early leavers who did not start upper secondary education and training and those who started but did not complete ISCED 3a, b or c studies.

The AES dataset allows a distinction to be made between early leavers from VET and early leavers from general education. However, the sample sizes are such that a country level analysis is only possible in a small number of countries.

2. A primary data collection covering eight countries (Belgium (both French and Flemish Communities), Denmark, Germany, France, Croatia, Italy, Austria and Portugal).

⁽⁶⁾ This chapter makes use of findings of the analysis carried out by ICF GHK under Cedefop's service contract No 2013-FWC25/AO/ECVL/IPS-ARANI/EarlyLeaving/005/13.

The primary data collection was carried out in a sample of countries that have average or above EU average rates of early leaving (with the exception of Croatia and Austria that have a below EU average rate). The countries were selected to represent a variety of VET systems as well as providing geographical diversity. The sample was also constructed to cover several countries that have specific national monitoring systems for early leaving.

In the selected countries, 402 individuals were interviewed on the factors associated with early leaving, the policy measures in place, the application of data collection systems, and the use of data to inform practice. The profiles of the interviewees were: national and regional/local policy-makers and education authorities, national stakeholders, heads of schools and training centres, VET teachers and trainers, companies providing apprenticeships, guidance personnel, second chance programmes, experts and other public authorities (public employment service, social services, etc.).

3. Desk research and a literature review.

The literature review informed the analysis of factors associated with early leaving. Over 70 articles, reports and evaluations were reviewed. The desk research and literature review also informed the initial mapping of over 300 VET policies relating to prevention, intervention or compensation. These were categorised and further information was collected through desk research on a sample of examples. The literature review and desk research covered the EU-28 Member States as well as Switzerland, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Norway, Serbia and Turkey.

CHAPTER 1: DEFINING AND MEASURING EARLY LEAVING FROM EDUCATION AND TRAINING

This chapter introduces the subject of early leaving from education and training (ELET) ⁽¹⁾, with a focus on general education. The first section shows that early leaving has costs and consequences for the individual, in terms of a higher risk of unemployment, social exclusion and poor health, and for society through increased public expenditure, for example on social welfare as well as the intergenerational transmission of educational and socio-economic attainment.

In the second section, the early leaving rates in European countries are provided as well as information on national quantitative targets for reducing early leaving. It shows that in recent years considerable improvements have been achieved in most European countries to reduce the rate of early leavers, and several countries have revised their national targets to more ambitious levels. However, there is room for improvement in a number of countries that are still far from the EU headline target as well as for the EU-28 as a whole.

The third section of this chapter maps the different definitions of early leaving from general education at national level (see Chapter 6 on indicators on early leaving from VET). Most European countries have their own specific national definitions, which are used in addition to the definition used by Eurostat in the context of the Labour Force Survey data collection on ELET. These national definitions are important as they are often linked to the data collection tools used to measure the scale of early leaving from education and training in a country.

The third section also presents information on countries' national data collection systems on early leaving from general education: the different data collection tools used in European countries, the responsible authorities, data aggregation and content, frequency of data analysis. Being one of the prerequisites for understanding the scale and the reasons for early leaving as well as for ensuring effective measures to tackle it, national data collection systems on this subject are still being developed and continually improved in many European countries.

1.1. Problems associated with leaving education and training early

A considerable body of research exists that highlights the benefits of extended participation in education. More or better education can lead to a series of positive outcomes related to employment, higher salaries, better health, less crime, higher social cohesion, lower public and social costs and higher productivity and growth. Conversely, inadequate education as result of early leaving has high costs for the individual, for society and for the economy (Psacharopoulos, 2007; Belfield, 2008; Nevala et al., 2011).

Despite of the importance of this subject, only a limited amount of research has been conducted across Europe into the costs for society of leaving education and training early, and/or the consequences for individuals ⁽²⁾. In the context of these national reports, early leaving means either not having completed compulsory education or not having completed upper secondary school (see Section 1.3 and the National Information Sheets for an overview of all national definitions of ELET).

⁽¹⁾ In this report the terms 'early leaving from education and training' and 'early school leaving' are used interchangeably and refer to all forms of leaving education and training before the end of upper secondary level.

⁽²⁾ Countries/regions reporting on existing national research on this subject include Belgium (Flemish Community), Germany, Estonia, France, Ireland, Greece, Spain, the Netherlands, Austria, Finland, Sweden, the United Kingdom and Norway.

Consequences for the individual

European reports have shown that, at the level of the individual, leaving education and training early creates a higher risk of unemployment, jobs with less employment security, more part-time work, and lower earnings (Nesse, 2010; European Commission, 2011a). In 2013, the unemployment rate amongst early leavers across the EU was 41 % (European Commission, 2014) compared to an overall youth unemployment rate of 23.5 % ⁽³⁾. Young people who leave education and training early are also less likely to participate in lifelong learning, which – given future skill requirements – will further restrict their opportunities in the labour market (European Commission, 2011a). Consequently, early leavers tend to depend more often on social welfare programmes and are at a higher risk of poverty and social exclusion (Belfield, 2008).

According to a study conducted by Steiner (2009) in Austria, those leaving education and training early face a risk of unemployment that is twice as high as for upper secondary level graduates. Furthermore, when early leavers manage to find a job, their risk of being in low-level occupations is four times higher. A French study by Gasquet & Roux (2006) that followed up early leavers found that a third of them did not have a job in the seven years after leaving school. Another study carried out in France shows that the risk of unemployment among early leavers during the three years after leaving is strongly increased for women and migrants (Bernard & Michaut, 2013).

Research carried out in Belgium (Flemish Community) demonstrates that there is a strong relationship between the level of education and the earning capacity of individuals. People with lower qualifications earn less during their lifetime career and their income increases less in comparison with those with higher qualifications. Those with lower levels of education generally also have less secure jobs as employability is closely related to the level of qualifications held (Elchardus, 2012). The link between educational attainment and employability has also been highlighted in a Greek study (Rousseas & Vretakou/Hellenic Pedagogical Institute, 2006).

Other reported outcomes are that early leavers are less likely to be 'active citizens' in the sense that they participate less in elections and other democratic processes (Nesse, 2010; Rousseas & Vretakou/Hellenic Pedagogical Institute, 2006). Moreover, early leaving also reduces people's opportunity to actively participate in social and cultural activities (Rousseas & Vretakou/Hellenic Pedagogical Institute, 2006).

Finally, early leavers may be more prone to poor physical and mental health (Belfield, 2008) and may run a higher risk of anti-social behaviour and criminal activity (ibid.; Nevala et al., 2011). According to the Audit Commission's 2010 report 'Against the Odds', in the United Kingdom (England) young men who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) are three times more likely to be depressed and are five times more likely to have a criminal record than their peers who had been in education, employment or training throughout their late teens. A Swedish state official report (*Utbildningsdepartementet*, 2013) mentions a number of both short- and long-term negative effects of not having an upper secondary education, including unemployment and poor health. The correlation between the level of education and ill health has also been mentioned in the study carried out by Elchardus (2012) in Belgium (Flemish Community), according to which people with lower qualification levels tend to have poorer health and suffer more often from chronic diseases. This in turn can result in a shorter life expectancy compared to those with a higher educational level.

⁽³⁾ Eurostat, EU-LFS [une_rt_a], (data extracted August 2014).

Consequences for society and the economy

Related to these individual consequences is the social and economic impact of early leaving from education and training. Inadequate education means that young people do not have the skill level demanded in today's economies, which are based on knowledge-intensive means of production (Nevala et al., 2011). Higher occurrence of unemployment, in turn, means lower economic growth and tax revenues, on the one hand, and higher unemployment and welfare payments, on the other. To this, higher costs of public services such as health care and social services are added (Nesse, 2010).

The impact of leaving education and training early can also carry across generations. Under-educated parents may not be able to afford to provide quality education services for their children, which consequently puts the children themselves at a greater risk of leaving school early (Psacharopoulos, 2007; Nesse, 2010). A Spanish study commissioned by the Ministry of Education revealed that the choices made in the past by the parents in relation to their own educational level determine, to a great extent, the choices subsequently made by their children. In this respect, early leaving tends to be a vicious circle transmitted across generations (Calero Martínez, J & al., 2011).

There have been attempts to calculate the costs of early leaving taking into account its impact on individuals' employment and income as well as other elements such as public expenditure on social welfare, health care and criminal justice. However, the results show large variations and are not comparable due to different calculation methodologies.

For example, a French report by the General Inspection of the Ministry of Education (Armand, Bisson-Vaivre & Lhermet, 2013) estimates the cost of each student leaving education and training early to be between EUR 220 000 and EUR 230 000 through his/her lifetime.

In a study carried out in Finland, the cost to society of an individual not in education, employment or training has been roughly estimated to be over EUR 40 000 per year. Social subsidies covering living and housing costs are estimated at EUR 10 000 and the loss of net contribution to the economy from work and taxes are estimated at approximately EUR 33 000. These costs will be cumulative if the stay out of education and employment is prolonged (Leinonen, 2012).

Based on research carried out in England by York University (Coles et al., 2010), the Scottish Government estimates that the cost of a single cohort of young people within the Scottish context failing to make the transition into regular employment to be in the region of GBP 2 billion (ca. EUR 2.5 billion, not taking into consideration opportunity costs).

A European-wide study into the cost of NEETs, i.e. young people who are not in employment, education or training, estimates that in 2011 the annual loss to Member States due to labour market disengagement among young people was EUR 153 billion, corresponding to 1.2 % of GDP in Europe (Eurofound, 2012).

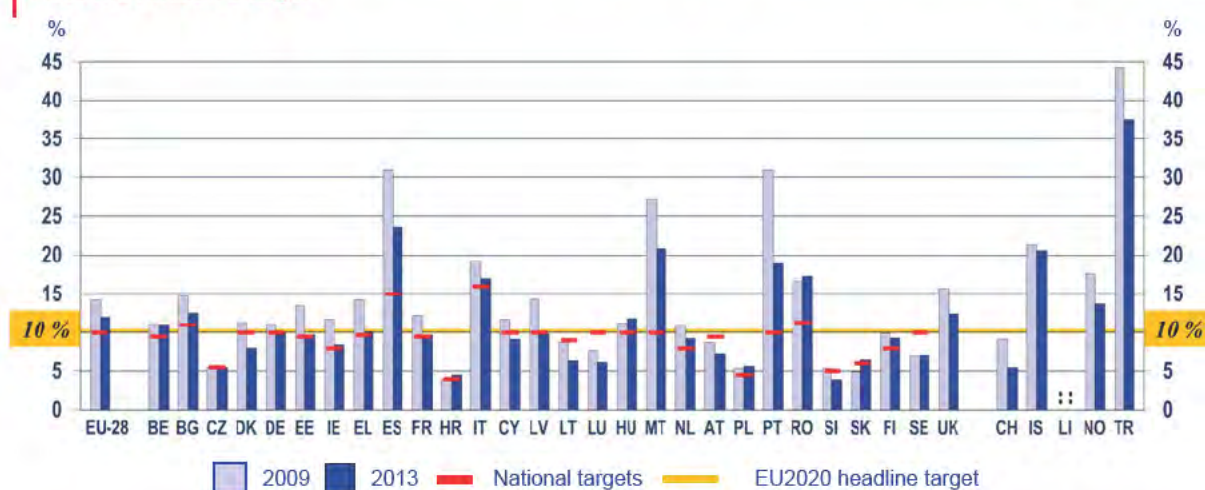
The available research thus highlights the urgency of gaining a better understanding of the problem in order to reduce early leaving. Although prevention might be costly in itself, as it involves changes in education systems as well as in related policy areas, the social and economic benefits will largely outweigh the costs to society, not to mention the benefits for individuals in terms of personal and economic well-being (European Commission, 2011a; Nevala et al., 2011).

1.2. ELET rates and national targets across Europe

Looking at the most recent ELET rates (Eurostat, 2013; see Figure 1.1) great disparities become apparent across European countries. In the EU-28, the rates vary from 3.9 % in Slovenia to 23.6 % in Spain, with an EU average of 12.0 %. Other European countries with rates above 20.0 % are Malta and Iceland; and Turkey recorded an ELET rate of 37.5 % in 2013 (see also Chapter 6 on rates of early leaving and drop-out based on PIAAC data).

Compared to figures from 2009, ELET rates have decreased in most countries. In more than half of European countries, ELET rates are currently below the Europe 2020 headline target of 10 %. In Croatia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Sweden, however, ELET rates have slightly increased since 2009; yet, in 2013, the rates in Croatia, Poland, Slovakia and Sweden remained below 10 %. Another 15 countries⁽⁴⁾ have ELET rates lower than 10 %. Some countries, despite having rates above 10 %, have made significant improvements since 2009. This is the case in Spain, Malta and Portugal where there has been a decrease of more than 6 percentage points in ELET rates.

Figure 1.1: Percentage of early leavers from education and training, 2009-2013, and national targets as compared with the EU headline target



| % | EU-28 | BE | BG | CZ | DK | DE | EE | IE | EL | ES | FR | HR | IT | CY | LV | LT | LU |
|---------|-------|------|------|-----|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 2009 | 14.2 | 11.1 | 14.7 | 5.4 | 11.3 | 11.1 | 13.5 | 11.7 | 14.2 | 30.9 | 12.2 | 3.9 | 19.2 | 11.7 | 14.3 | 8.7 | 7.7 |
| 2013 | 12.0 | 11.0 | 12.5 | 5.4 | 8.0 | 9.9 | 9.7 | 8.4 | 10.1 | 23.6 | 9.7 | 4.5 | 17 | 9.1 | 9.8 | 6.3 | 6.1 |
| Targets | <10.0 | 9.5 | 11 | 5.5 | 10 | 10 | 9.5 | 8 | 9.7 | 15 | 9.5 | 4 | 16 | 10 | 10 | 9 | 10 |
| % | HU | MT | NL | AT | PL | PT | RO | SI | SK | FI | SE | UK | CH | IS | LI | NO | TR |
| 2009 | 11.2 | 27.1 | 10.9 | 8.7 | 5.3 | 30.9 | 16.6 | 5.3 | 4.9 | 9.9 | 7 | 15.7 | 9.1 | 21.3 | ∴ | 17.6 | 44.3 |
| 2013 | 11.8 | 20.8 | 9.2 | 7.3 | 5.6 | 18.9 | 17.3 | 3.9 | 6.4 | 9.3 | 7.1 | 12.4 | 5.4 | 20.5 | ∴ | 13.7 | 37.5 |
| Targets | 10 | 10 | <8 | 9.5 | 4.5 | 10 | 11.3 | 5 | 6 | 8 | <10 | ∴ | ∴ | ∴ | ∴ | ∴ | ∴ |

Source: Eurostat, EU-LFS [edat_lfse_14], (data extracted October 2014).

⁽⁴⁾ Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, France, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Austria, Slovenia, Finland and Switzerland

Explanatory note

The indicator is based on the percentage of the population aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education (ISCED levels 0, 1, 2 or 3c short) and who were not in further education or training during the last four weeks preceding the survey.

EU target: The Europe 2020 headline target is to reduce the rates of early leaving from education and training to below 10 %.

National targets: These have been defined in the National Reform Programmes (NRPs) or more recent policy developments by the EU-28 countries (updated on 3/3/2014)

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/europe_2020_indicators/documents/Europe_2020_Targets.pdf

Country specific notes

France: Break in time series in 2013.

Luxembourg: Break in time series in 2009.

United Kingdom: No target set in the National Reform Programme as setting per se was not in line with national policy. See https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/298427/Balance_Of_Competence_-_Consultation_Document.pdf

Switzerland, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Turkey: As non-EU countries, these countries were not required to submit NRPs and/or set national targets on ELET.

Reducing ELET rates is an essential objective of the Europe 2020 Strategy. One of the headline targets of this Strategy is to reduce the EU average rate to less than 10 % by 2020 ⁽⁵⁾. This and other EU headline targets have been translated into national targets, reflecting the different social and economic circumstances of each Member State. National Reform Programmes (NRPs) ⁽⁶⁾ submitted by the Member States each year to the European Commission show the progress made in attaining these national targets.

All countries, with the exception of the United Kingdom, set their national quantitative targets for reducing ELET in their National Reform Programmes. Most countries are aiming at less than 10 % of early leavers, and some decided on more ambitious targets. The Czech Republic, Ireland, the Netherlands, Slovakia and Finland set their national targets at, or below, 8 %. Countries with targets of 5 % and below are Croatia, Poland and Slovenia where ELET rates have traditionally been low. The national targets in countries with higher rates, such as Bulgaria, Spain, Italy and Romania, are above 10 %.

In some cases, countries have national targets that are higher than their actual ELET rates. In Austria, for example, this was the case in April 2011 when the national targets were first introduced ⁽⁷⁾; and the reason is that between 2006 and 2009 the ELET rate fluctuated (plus/minus 10 %). In Sweden, the overall register-based statistics indicate that the survey-based Swedish Labour Force Survey, and thus also the Labour Force Survey on which Eurostat's data is based, underestimates, to a certain extent, the proportion of young people who have not completed upper secondary education. This is probably linked to the fact that those who have not completed upper secondary education have a somewhat lower response rate to the survey than those who have completed it. Consequently, the actual proportion of 18-24 year-olds not having completed upper secondary education and who are not currently in education is likely to be somewhat higher ⁽⁸⁾.

Some countries, such as Latvia and Malta, have revised the national targets set in 2011, or are currently in the process of revising them. This is due to the progress achieved in reducing ELET rates and/or to reaching the initial quantitative targets. Consequently, more ambitious targets have been set by these countries in order to meet the objectives of Europe 2020. Other countries have not made any changes to their initial national targets. In Denmark, for example, no new ELET target has been set but efforts are being focused on ensuring that more young people achieve ISCED 3 education or training.

⁽⁵⁾ http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/europe-2020-in-a-nutshell/targets/index_en.htm

⁽⁶⁾ http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/europe-2020-in-your-country/index_en.htm

⁽⁷⁾ http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/targets_en.pdf

⁽⁸⁾ <http://www.government.se/content/1/c6/23/92/30/08801d23.pdf>

Although the UK declined to set targets for reducing ELET as part of its NRP, England, Wales and Scotland have made specific commitments for reducing the rates of young people 'not in education, employment, or training' (NEETs). England aims to achieve full participation of 16-17 year olds by 2015. In Wales, the number of NEETS aged 16-18 should be reduced to 9.0 % by 2017. Scotland committed itself to reduce the level of early leavers to 10 %. In Northern Ireland, there is an aspiration that young people will have access to and avail themselves of training opportunities.

Similarly, some other countries have set their own national or regional targets related to their national data collections on early leavers from education and training. For instance, Belgium's Flemish Community has set up a regional target of reducing the ELET rate to 4.3 % by 2020 with an interim target of 5.7 % by 2016. Lithuania, in their recently approved National Education Strategy 2013-2022 ⁽⁹⁾ has established a national target of maintaining the ELET rate below 8 % by 2022.

1.3. National definitions and ELET data collection systems

Although leaving education and training early is a widespread challenge, there is no general consensus on how it is defined. Early leaving is considered in some countries to denote leaving education before completing upper secondary education, whilst in others it is leaving school before completing compulsory education or without obtaining a qualification such as a school leaving certificate.

The term Early Leaving from Education and Training (ELET) has been coined at EU level. Early leavers are defined as 18-24 year-olds with only lower secondary education or less who are no longer in education or training ⁽¹⁰⁾. Early leaving can therefore be distinguished from 'drop-out', which refers to discontinuing an on-going course, e.g. dropping out in the middle of the school term (European Commission, 2011a; see Chapter 6 on indicators on early leaving from VET).

It is important to note that the way early leaving is defined in countries is often linked to the data collection process and this, in turn, can have an effect on the policies being developed to prevent or reduce it. A focus on drop-out may, therefore, result in increased efforts to prevent it and to intervene as early as possible. Focusing on the number of young people who have not completed upper secondary education, on the other hand, may trigger measures that aim to help them re-enter education or training to complete their studies (European Commission, 2013a). Tackling early leaving at this stage can be more difficult as compulsory full-time education ends before the end of upper secondary education in all European countries, except the Netherlands and Portugal (Eurydice, 2013).

In order to understand why young people leave education and training early, it is moreover important to see early leaving not only as a status or educational outcome but as a process of disengagement that occurs over time (Lyche, 2010). Chronic absenteeism and exclusion from school can be among the symptoms, or may even be the cause of students leaving early (Neild et al., 2007). However, there are more signs which indicate that students may be at risk. Warning signs may occur as early as in primary school. They may be related to individual factors (e.g. educational performance, behaviour, attitudes) or to factors within individuals' families, their schools, and communities (Rumberger and Lim, 2008; see also Chapter 2). Understanding early leaving from education and training as a complex process, detecting early signals and identifying students who are at risk of leaving education and training early is therefore a prerequisite for developing targeted and effective measures to prevent it.

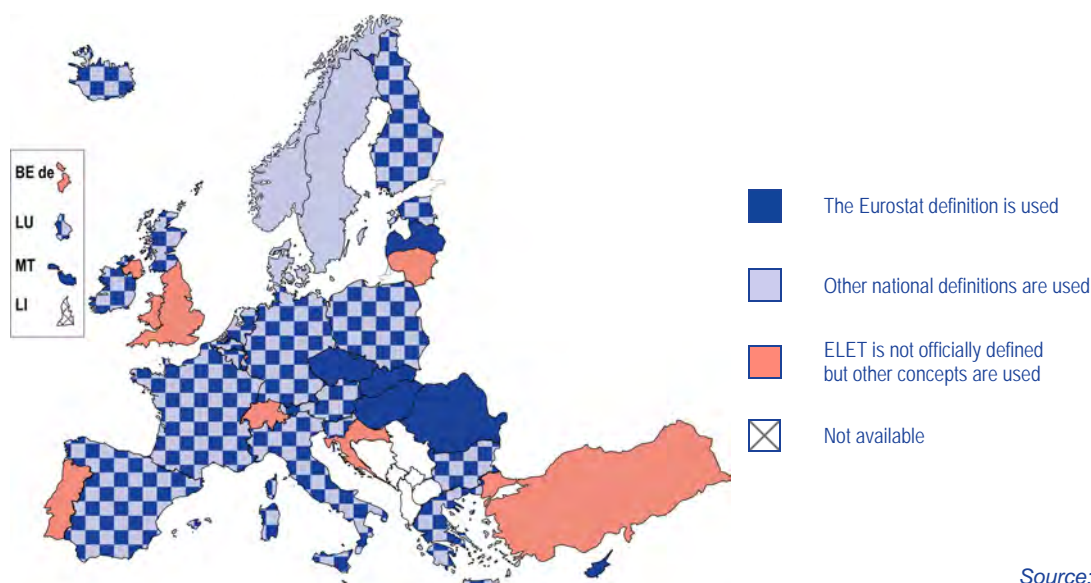
⁽⁹⁾ http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=463390&p_tr2=2

⁽¹⁰⁾ http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Glossary:Early_school_leaver

National definitions of early leavers

In an effort to understand the phenomenon of early leaving and develop policies and measures to tackle it, most European countries/regions have established definitions that they use in the policy process (see Figure 1.2 and the National Information Sheets for an overview of all national definitions). The majority of them use the Eurostat definition, which considers the percentage of 18-24 year olds with only lower secondary education or less who are no longer in education or training. In fact, in the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Latvia, Hungary, Malta, Romania and Slovakia, the Eurostat definition is the main one used to describe early leaving from education and training.

Figure 1.2: National definitions of early leavers, 2013/14



Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory note

The Eurostat definition considers all 18-24 year-olds with only lower secondary education or less who are no longer in education or training to be early leavers. National definitions vary from country to country.

Eighteen other countries/regions also use other national definitions in parallel to the one given by Eurostat, and in Denmark, Sweden and Norway only the national definitions are used. In some countries such as Estonia, France, Austria, Slovenia and Finland several different national definitions can be found.

Many countries/regions in this category ⁽¹¹⁾ define early leavers largely as young people who leave school without completing what is considered in the national context as basic education. This refers to the end of lower secondary education in Germany, Estonia, Greece, Austria and Slovenia; however, in the Netherlands, it refers to the end of general upper secondary level. In countries such as Ireland and the United Kingdom (Scotland), it is related to the age at which students leave education.

The other countries/regions in this category ⁽¹²⁾ define early leavers largely as young people who have left school without reaching an upper secondary school leaving certificate. However, in Bulgaria, this definition is restricted to students below the age of 18. And in Norway, non-completion of the upper secondary level is measured five years after it starts. In other words, students who are still in upper secondary education after five years will also be counted as early leavers.

⁽¹¹⁾ Belgium (French Community), Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Slovenia and the United Kingdom (Scotland)

⁽¹²⁾ Belgium (Flemish Community), Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Spain, France, Luxembourg, Austria, Slovenia, Finland, Sweden, Iceland and Norway

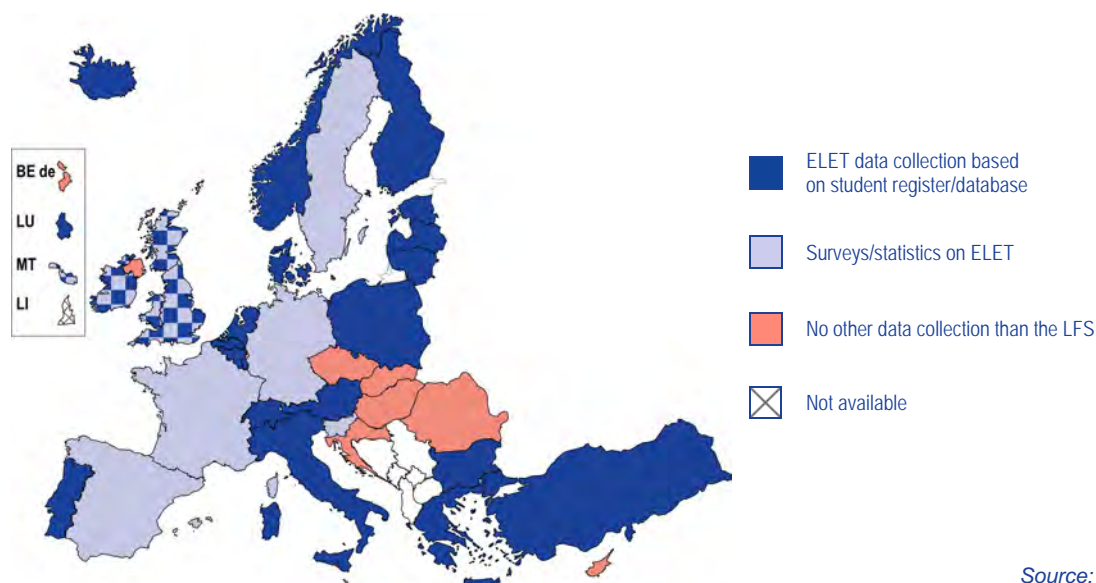
In nine different countries/regions⁽¹³⁾, early leaving is not officially defined, but other similar concepts are used, such as absenteeism, drop-out and 'not in education, employment or training' (NEET).

National data collection tools – types, aims and reliability

The national definitions of early leaving are closely linked to the data collection tools used to measure the scale of the problem in a country (see Figure 1.3). Therefore, most of the European countries/regions that either rely on the Eurostat definition and/or have no official national definition of early leaving (see Figure 1.2) do not collect data on the rate of early leavers other than that collected in the context of the Labour Force Survey (LFS). This concerns Belgium (German-speaking Community), Czech Republic, Croatia, Cyprus, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland).

The remaining countries/regions collect information on early leaving through different data collection tools in addition to the data gathered for the LFS. In Belgium (French Community), Ireland, Spain, France, Portugal, Sweden and the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Scotland), several different data collection tools are used to gather data on early leaving. Among these tools are national student registers or student databases, which can be used for an assessment at central/top level of the scope of the problem. Quantitative and qualitative studies or surveys are other tools being used that can contribute to a better understanding of the correlations and reasons for early leaving.

Figure 1.3: Sources used for production of national data on early leaving (other than Eurostat LFS), 2013/14



Explanatory note

Data on ELET from student registers or student databases is collected automatically from school administration systems based on students' personal data, and they can be used for an ad hoc assessment of the scope of ELET at different public authority levels. Quantitative and qualitative studies or surveys are other tools being used that can contribute to a better understanding of the correlations and reasons for ELET.

Country specific note

Czech Republic: Although there is no other regular data collection on ELET than the LFS, the National Institute for Education (NÚV) has previously carried out surveys on an ad-hoc basis providing, amongst other data, facts and contextual information on drop-outs from education (especially from VET).

⁽¹³⁾ Belgium (German-speaking Community), Croatia, Lithuania, Portugal, the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland), Switzerland and Turkey

Across Europe, most countries/regions ⁽¹⁴⁾ use a student register or student database to gather data on early leavers.

For example, in the **Netherlands**, all students at publicly funded secondary or secondary vocational schools are registered in BRON (the Basic Records Database for Education) with a unique number and other personal and school-related information. A young person who is no longer registered in BRON is classified as an early leaver. Moreover, since 2009, all schools are obliged by law to register school absenteeism via the Digital Absence Portal (*Digitaal verzuimloket*). Truancy and missing school are often signs that a student is at risk of dropping out and it is important for schools, parents and other actors involved to respond quickly. Data from the Portal makes it possible to generate monthly reports on students who are absent or who are 'de-registered' without a basic qualification.

Moreover, ten countries/regions ⁽¹⁵⁾ refer to surveys or statistics that have been or are being carried out on the subject of early leaving:

In **Malta** and the **United Kingdom (Scotland)**, for example, surveys are carried out to gather data about early leavers from education and training after compulsory education or after they have left the education system.

Finally, in the Czech Republic, Portugal and Romania surveys providing contextual information on early leaving and/or on the reasons for dropping out of school are carried out on an ad hoc basis.

In **Portugal**, for example, the General Directorate for Education conducts, on an ad hoc basis, surveys in schools in disadvantaged contexts, which provide some information about the reasons for students' drop-out and the measures taken by schools to support these students.

The majority of European countries report that the main purpose of their data collection is to monitor ELET rates and/or to make policy decisions based on the collected data. Other reported purposes of countries'/regions' data collections are: identifying individual early leavers and supporting them in their further education and training (France and Luxembourg); informing teachers and school heads about students at risk of early leaving (Turkey); monitoring and evaluating the education system as a whole (Lithuania, Poland, Sweden and Norway); gathering administrative information, including on financial resources (Flemish Community of Belgium, Germany and Poland); and monitoring schools (the Netherlands and Poland).

Responsible authorities

The authorities or institutions in charge of the data collection on early leaving are similar across the majority of European countries. Data collection for the LFS is usually carried out by the national statistics offices. For all the other data collections described above, in most countries it is the top-level education authority that is responsible for determining the data to be collected, the analyses to be carried out, as well as the publication of the final statistics and indicators. However, the national statistics office or a research centre processes and analyses the data; and schools collect the basic information. In some cases, the information is passed on to the intermediate level, i.e. local or regional authorities, before it reaches the top-level.

Some countries/regions vary slightly in their distribution of responsibility for the ELET data collection. In Sweden and the United Kingdom (England and Scotland), local authorities are responsible for (some of) the data collection.

Other countries are currently making efforts to improve their working methods on specific data collections:

⁽¹⁴⁾ Belgium (French and Flemish Community), Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Finland, the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Scotland), Switzerland, Iceland, Norway, and Turkey

⁽¹⁵⁾ Germany, Ireland, Spain, France, Malta, Slovenia, Sweden and the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Scotland)

In **Poland**, for example, the Education Information System (EIS) is changing its data collection on ELET (to be available in 2017) so that the data from schools and other education institutions will be transferred directly to the central database run by the Ministry of Education, instead of being transferred through the territorial self-government units at local level and then the regional superintendent's office. The organisation of the new system will reduce the number of institutions involved in the data collection process, which is intended to result in more valid and reliable data.

As part of the project 'New Possibilities', the **Norwegian** Directorate for Education and Training publishes the 'Completion Barometer' twice a year during the project period. The project has developed a common set of indicators so that successful completion and drop-outs are registered in the same way in each county and municipality. The project will continue to develop the indicators in order to have reliable statistics, which reveal the challenges in upper secondary education and training.

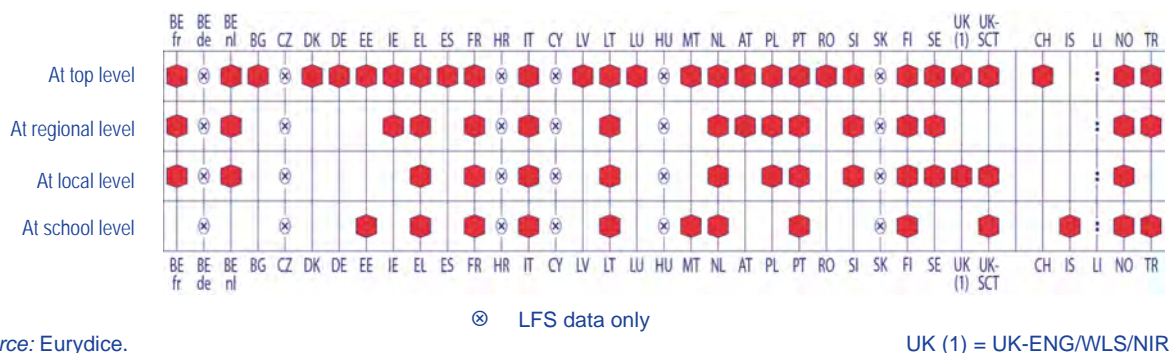
Finally, the responsible authorities (mainly ministries of education or statistical offices) are also charged with ensuring the reliability of the collected ELET data by acting according to official guidelines, practices and quality checks. In countries using a student register or student database, the data on early leavers is collected automatically from the school administration systems based on students' personal data. The institutions running these databases are mostly obliged to control the completeness, accuracy and reliability of the data, which is then often reviewed by the education authorities.

Data aggregation

A good understanding of the scale of early leaving from education and training by all stakeholders is an important condition for developing effective policies to tackle it. Data that allows for a comparison between schools, local authorities and/or regions can promote cooperation between the different levels to take action to address early leaving from education and training (European Commission, 2013a).

Figure 1.4 shows the levels at which data are available in an aggregated format across European countries. In countries with several data collection tools, all the existing levels of data aggregation are displayed.

Figure 1.4: Level of ELET data aggregation, 2013/14



Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory note

The top level for education is the central government in most countries. In some cases, however, decision-making occurs at a different level, namely that of the governments of the Communities in Belgium, the *Länder* in Germany, the governments of the Autonomous Communities in addition to the central government in Spain, the devolved administrations of the United Kingdom, and the Cantons in Switzerland.

Country specific notes

Spain: Aggregated data are available at both national level and Autonomous Community level.

United Kingdom (NIR): Only LFS data is collected.

Switzerland: In this figure, the top-level refers to the national level.

In fifteen countries/regions collecting data on ELET, other than that for the LFS, the data is aggregated at three or all four levels (top, regional, local and school level)⁽¹⁶⁾. However, in nine other countries/regions⁽¹⁷⁾, ELET data is available in an aggregated format only at one level. This is the top-level in most cases, except in Iceland where the data is only available at school level. In Germany, aggregated data are available at the level of each *Land*, which is the top-level education authority; moreover, consolidated cross-*Länder*/national data are available from the Standing Conference and the Federal Statistical Office.

In Belgium (Flemish Community), there are plans to extend data aggregation to school level. Similarly, in Romania data will also be aggregated at regional level in the near future.

Data coverage

In addition to different levels of data aggregation, a wide range of data is required both to understand early leaving from education and training and to target policies. The essential elements of a data collection on ELET include: the age of early leavers; the link between ELET and absenteeism; differences in ELET occurrence according to students' gender, their school pathways and achievement; personal background information such as socio-economic, migrant and language background, etc. (European Commission, 2013a).

Figure 1.5 shows the coverage of data through the data collections presented above (excluding the ones taking place in the frame of the LFS). In countries with more than one ELET data collection, all the elements are taken into account.

For purposes of analysing data on early leaving, information about students' gender is collected in all countries; students' age is also recorded everywhere except in Ireland. However, data about students' socio-economic background, education level of parents and mother tongue are elements that are used in ELET data collections in the least number of countries (9 or 10). This is closely followed by 'native/non-native' (13) and 'student achievement' (13).

For their data collections and analyses on ELET, fifteen countries/regions⁽¹⁸⁾ use information about most elements (nine or more) covered in Figure 1.5; whereas others (Denmark, Ireland, Spain, France, Poland, Slovenia, Switzerland and Iceland) use a limited number of elements (five or less). A number of countries collect and use data on other issues than those presented in the Figure above:

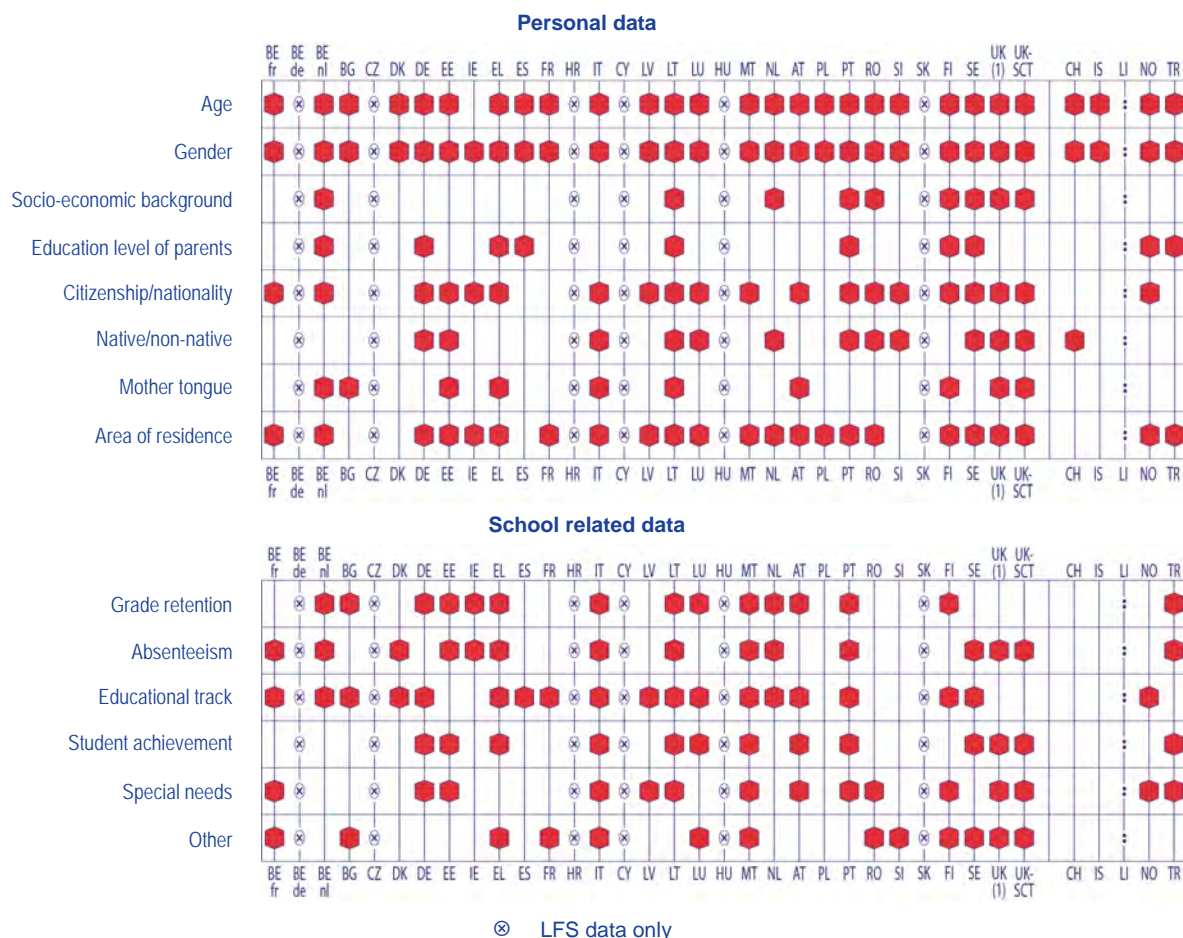
Most often this includes the highest degree or diploma obtained (**BG, FR, IT, RO** and **UK-SCT**) or, as in **Sweden**, the attainment of an upper secondary level qualification. In the **United Kingdom (Scotland)**, information about additional support to students is included in the ELET data collection, such as being looked after (by local authorities), free school meals and the deprivation index. In **Finland**, other elements of the ELET data collection include information about students' subject choices; in **Greece**, it concerns students' subjects and grades; and in **Bulgaria** and **Malta**, information about the geographical location of the school is gathered. In **Malta**, there is additionally information about the educational sectors (state, church or independent schools) that students attend as well as their use of school transport available.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Belgium (French and Flemish Community), Greece, France, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Finland, Sweden, the United Kingdom (Scotland), Turkey and Norway

⁽¹⁷⁾ Belgium (French Community), Bulgaria, Denmark, Spain, Latvia, Luxembourg, Romania, Iceland and Switzerland

⁽¹⁸⁾ Belgium (Flemish Community), Germany, Estonia, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Austria, Portugal, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Scotland)

Figure 1.5: ELET data coverage, 2013/14



Source: Eurydice.

UK (1) = UK-ENG/WLS/NIR

Explanatory note

Absenteeism refers to young people not attending school or training. It covers a range of behaviours, including chronic absenteeism, school refusal and truancy. Educational track refers to the type of education or school a student is placed into based on his/her ability. Whilst this need not necessarily involve a division into academic/general and vocational tracks, in practice this tends to be the case.

Native/non-native refers, respectively, to students born in the country of instruction and those born abroad.

Country specific notes

Belgium (BE fr): Information about the date and place of birth is also gathered, as well as about the type of school attended by the students.

Germany: Data on the education level of parents is only available for those students who live in the same household as their parents.

Greece: Data about the mother tongue refers to the parents' mother tongue.

Italy: Socio-economic background and education level of parents are data that are not included in the student register. These data are collected by schools at enrolment, but they are not used for the ELET data collection since they are subject to privacy restrictions.

Romania: Personal data is also being collected about ethnic minority status (Roma). Data about living area refers to urban/rural area of residence.

United Kingdom (NIR): Only LFS data is collected.

It can be noted that in countries/regions where data is available in aggregated format at different levels, including local or school level (see Figure 1.4) ⁽¹⁹⁾, a wider range of data on ELET tends to be collected and used in ELET data analyses than in most countries where ELET data aggregation is limited to the top level.

Finally, issues related to data security and data protection have led to certain restrictions in countries' data collections on ELET:

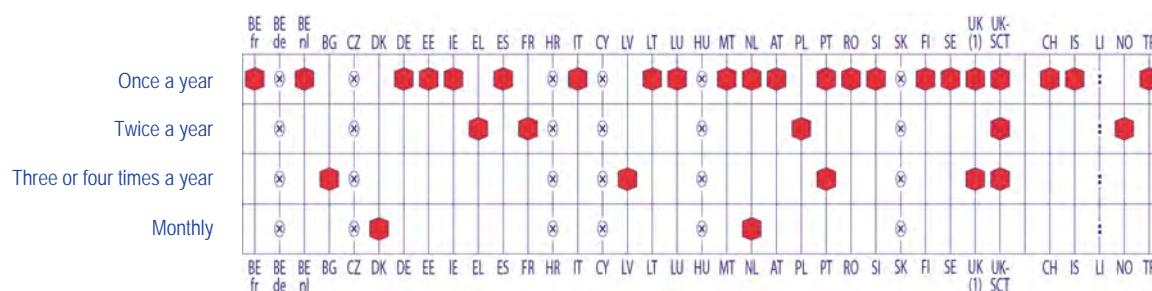
In **Austria**, no social background variables are collected as part of student records, besides gender and mother tongue, because of concerns over data protection. In **Germany**, data on students' socio-economic background and living area are not available above the level of the respective *Land*. In **Poland**, the Education Information System currently in place allows only for the collection of data in aggregated form, i.e. reflecting the total number of students in each category. In the near future, the data presented in Figure 1.5 will be collected for each student individually so that recording and monitoring of a students' complete educational career will be possible.

Frequency of data analysis

In order for the data on the number of early leavers and those at risk of leaving early to be accurate, it needs to be up-to-date. Data collections that take place no more than once a year may not provide sufficient information to monitor the current situation and evaluate the impact of on-going measures. The use of different data collections at different time intervals could therefore be helpful in developing a better picture of the problem of early leaving in a country (European Commission, 2013a).

Data on ELET collected in the context of the LFS (not included in Figure 1.6) is usually gathered and analysed four times a year. For all other data collections, there is some variation (see below and also the National Information Sheets for more information on the frequency of ELET data collection and analysis).

Figure 1.6: Frequency of ELET data analysis, 2013/14



⊗ LFS data only

UK (1) = UK-ENG/WLS/NIR

Source: Eurydice.

Country specific notes

Belgium (BE fr): Data concerning student absenteeism is monitored in the French Community of Belgium throughout the year by the schools, who inform the administration.

United Kingdom (NIR): Only LFS data is collected.

In 18 countries/regions ⁽²⁰⁾, aggregated ELET data is available only once a year. However, amongst these countries is Estonia, where the Estonian Education Information System analyses ELET data once a year for aggregating education statistics, but schools approve the data on a monthly basis, which allows for ad hoc extractions of data. Similarly, in Malta, ELET data is analysed annually at

⁽¹⁹⁾ This is the case for example in Belgium (Flemish Community), Greece, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Portugal, Finland, Sweden, the United Kingdom (Scotland) and Turkey.

⁽²⁰⁾ Belgium (French and Flemish Community), Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Spain, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Austria, Romania, Slovenia, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland, Iceland and Turkey

central level, whereas at school level regular monitoring of data is carried out. Absenteeism is even monitored daily.

In Greece, France, Poland, the United Kingdom (Scotland) and Norway, ELET data analysis takes place twice a year.

In all other countries/regions, there is at least one data collection that results in aggregated ELET data three or four times a year or even monthly. The latter occurs in Denmark and the Netherlands. In Bulgaria, Latvia, Portugal, the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Scotland), some of the ELET data is analysed quarterly. ELET data, which is collected more than twice a year, is usually based on data collection tools such as a student register or student database (see Figure 1.3) ⁽²¹⁾.

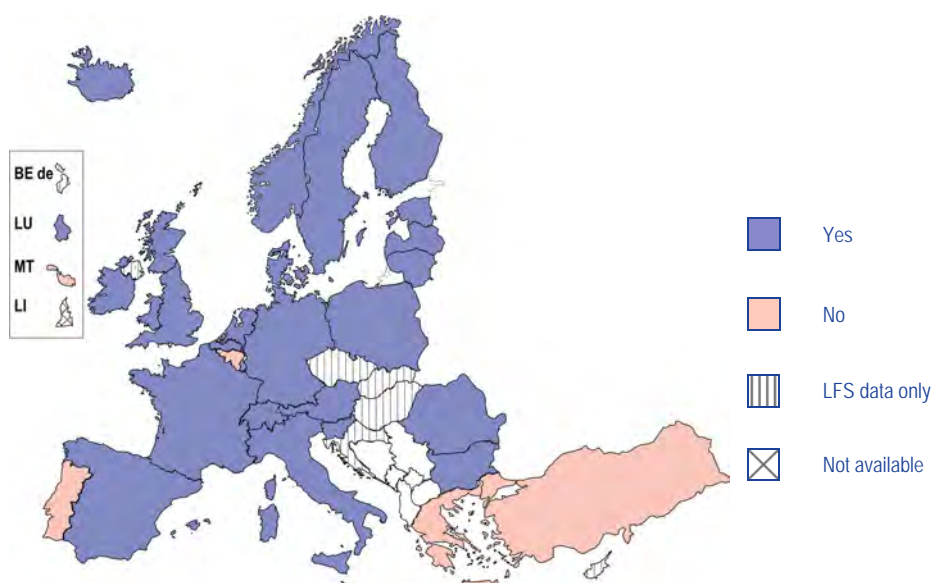
Data publication

In the great majority of European countries, data collected for ELET purposes is made publicly available (see Figure 1.7 and the National Information Sheets for the references/links to the publications). The same is true for the aggregated data collected in the context of the LFS (not included in Figure 1.7), except for example in the Czech Republic where the aggregated and anonymised individual data are available upon request, and in Estonia where the data are largely only available to the statistical office.

As it is important to protect the identity and personal information of all young people (European Commission, 2013a), some countries such as Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Austria have established restrictions on the availability of their other ELET data.

Finally, in five countries/regions – Belgium (French Community), Greece, Malta, Portugal and Turkey – the collected ELET data is not publicly available.

Figure 1.7: Publication of ELET data, 2013/14



Source: Eurydice.

Country specific note

Belgium (BE fr): The data are not published; however, they are available on request in an anonymised format.

⁽²¹⁾ This is for example the case in Bulgaria, Denmark, Latvia, the Netherlands, Portugal and the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Scotland).

CHAPTER 2: FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO STUDENTS LEAVING THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM EARLY

This second chapter presents short thematic overviews of the research literature, national surveys and statistical data on the factors most frequently quoted as having an influence on the rates of students leaving general education and training early. The literature review is not exhaustive, but presents some of the most widely cited papers, largely but not exclusively, in the English language. A literature review focused on early leaving from VET is presented in Chapter 6.

The first section of this chapter focuses on the factors which relate to individual and family circumstances – socio-economic status (SES), migrant or minority background and gender. It shows that students who are born abroad tend to have higher ELET rates in comparison to students born in the country of residence. However, this can be due to the fact that students born abroad generally face greater challenges in accessing and participating in education than their peers (e.g. due to language and/or cultural barriers, socio-economic segregation, etc.). As far as gender is concerned, male students are almost twice as likely to leave general school education with low or no qualifications. The effect of gender is, however, not so straightforward as students' socio-economic background also seems to influence this. The higher the SES, the less apparent are the differences in the rates of early leaving between male and female students. Both migrant/minority backgrounds and gender alone are therefore not determining factors with respect to students leaving education and training early.

The second section examines some of the education system related factors which impact on ELET rates. Some aspects of education systems such as grade retention, socio-economic segregation or early tracking are identified as having a negative influence on the rates of early leaving. Grade retention may increase educational inequalities, and the socio-economic segregation of schools may only aggravate the situation of low achievers in geographical areas characterised by low levels of socio-economic status and student achievement. Directing students into different educational pathways or tracks too early by placing them into either academic or vocational programmes based on their achievements, can also be detrimental to their education outcomes as they may become demotivated and lose interest in learning.

In contrast, high quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) as well as a smooth transition to upper secondary education can help reduce the numbers of students leaving early. Nevertheless, both areas remain a challenge. More relevant curricula, better availability and accessibility of different educational pathways and generally more flexibility is needed to encourage students to complete their education at this level.

Finally, since early leaving can also be influenced by local labour market conditions, the last section of this chapter looks briefly at factors related to the labour market. Depending on the context, the labour market can act as 'pull' or 'push' factor in the early leaving process. Good employment opportunities for low-qualified workers could encourage students to leave school early to become financially independent. However, unemployment trends also have an impact on the early leaving rates and in some cases can lead to early leaving (see also Chapter 6 on the role of VET).

2.1. Family, gender, migration and socio-economic factors

Leaving education and training early is acknowledged to be the result of factors which belong to two main categories that interact with each other: school-based factors and factors related to the individual, family and social background (Thibert, 2013). Although early leaving is often based on an individual's decision, it is nevertheless possible to identify some common factors that can have an impact on students' educational outcomes and consequently on their decision to leave school

prematurely. Socio-economic status, coming from a migrant background as well as gender have often been referred to as factors that influence early leaving. This section will discuss these variables implicated in the multi-faceted process of early leaving from education and training.

Socio-economic status

According to the European Commission there is a strong link between leaving education and training early, social disadvantage and a low level of parental education (2011b). Many studies confirm that low socio-economic status is one of the key factors that can increase the risk of early leaving. In general, early leavers are much more likely to come from families with a low socio-economic status, i.e. unemployed parents, low household income, and low levels of parental education, or to belong to vulnerable social groups such as migrants (European Parliament, 2011).

In an analysis made as part of the **Bulgarian** government's strategy for reducing the rate of early leaving (see Chapter 3 and the National Information Sheets) socio-economic reasons have been identified as being amongst the main causes of early leaving. Unemployment, low income, low living standards and poverty put many students at an increased risk of dropping out of school. As a result of financial and economic difficulties, many students have to help their families by contributing to family income, which affects their participation in the learning process.

Similarly, a **Dutch** survey on the reasons for leaving school prematurely reveals that the students are in general more likely to come from poor, socially disadvantaged, backgrounds where parents have a low level of education, and where they need to contribute to the family income or take adult responsibilities. Personal problems (e.g. parents' divorce) have also been frequently mentioned among the main reasons for their decision to abandon schooling (ROA, 2013).

In **Austria**, a study carried out by Steiner (2009) determined that students whose parents left school early face a seven times higher risk of leaving school early than students with well-educated parents. As for students whose parents are unemployed, this risk is five times higher than for students whose parents are in employment.

A number of family-related factors such as family instability and lifestyle, single-parenthood, poor living conditions, physical and mental health and domestic violence can, moreover, increase young peoples' likelihood of giving up education and training prematurely. Other family-related factors such as parent-child relationships and parental involvement in children's education can also play a role (European Parliament, 2011).

In **Poland**, some of the main reasons identified for students leaving education and training early are related to family circumstances and the ways families operate (e.g. child negligence, pathologies in the family, alcoholism, lack of parenting skills), as well as a low level of parental educational attainment and a lack of positive educational role models in the family (Fatyga et al., 2001).

In the **United Kingdom (England)**, children in local authority care are much more likely to be not in education, employment or training than their peers (House of Commons, 2009).

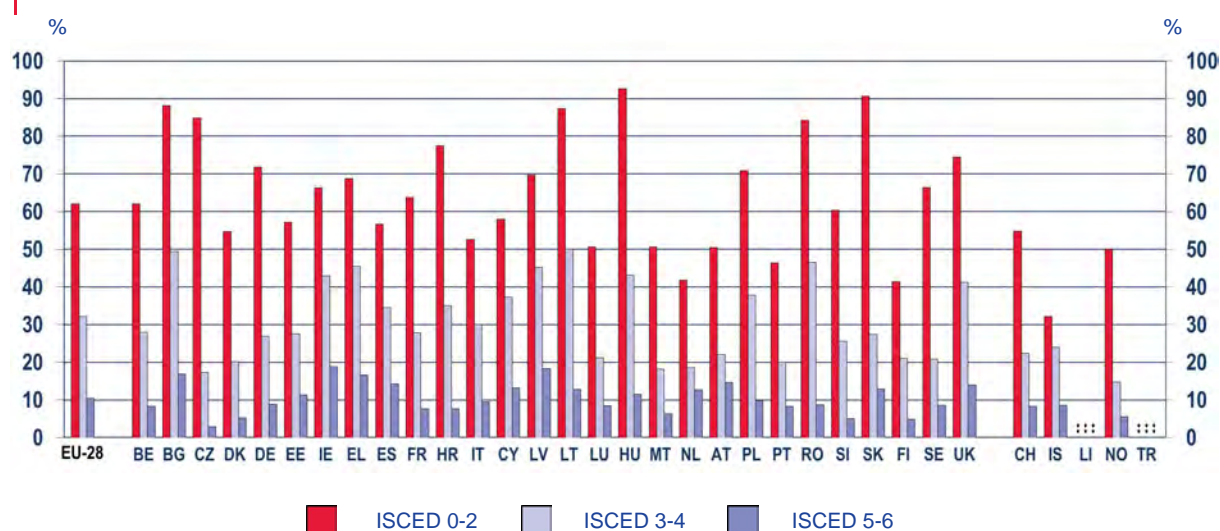
Related to the employment status and income of parents, which are commonly referred to as risk factors for early leaving, a low level of parental education is also considered as a major contributing risk factor (OECD, 2012). The level of education of the mother, in particular, is associated with a higher risk (Nevala et al., 2011). This finding has been confirmed by a study carried out in Croatia (Feric et al., 2010). More generally, it has been found that parents with a low level of education are less effective in developing the cultural capital of their children (Flouri and Ereky-Stevens, 2008).

A study carried out in **Belgium (Flemish Community)** reveals that the level of parental education strongly influences the probability of their children obtaining a secondary qualification. Amongst children with low-educated parents, the risk of leaving school early is nearly five times higher than for children whose parents have a secondary qualification and more than ten times higher than for children whose parents hold a tertiary degree (Lavrijsen and Nicaise, 2013).

Socio-economic disadvantage and educational disadvantage are thus closely interrelated (Eurofound, 2012). Living in households with low work intensity, or affected by poverty or severe material

deprivation coupled with low levels of educational attainment among parents is likely to have a detrimental impact on children's education. Figure 2.1 presents a picture of how many children are at risk of being affected by this socio-economic disadvantage; it shows the rate of children (aged 0-17) with parents whose education level is ISCED 0-2 at most, and who are at risk of poverty or social exclusion. These rates are compared to rates of children (aged 0-17) whose parents achieved upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED 3-4) as well as children whose parental educational level is at ISCED 5-6 (first and second stage of tertiary education).

Figure 2.1: Percentage of children (aged 0-17) at risk of poverty or social exclusion by highest education level of their parents (1997 ISCED 0-2, 3-4 and 5-6), 2013



| % | EU-28 | BE | BG | CZ | DK | DE | EE | IE | EL | ES | FR | HR | IT | CY | LV | LT | LU |
|-----------|-------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| ISCED 0-2 | 62.2 | 62.1 | 88.3 | 84.9 | 54.7 | 71.9 | 57.3 | 66.4 | 68.9 | 56.7 | 63.9 | 77.6 | 52.6 | 58.1 | 69.8 | 87.4 | 50.7 |
| ISCED 3-4 | 32.2 | 28.0 | 49.5 | 17.3 | 20.2 | 26.9 | 27.6 | 43.0 | 45.5 | 34.6 | 27.9 | 35.1 | 30.1 | 37.3 | 45.3 | 50.2 | 21.3 |
| ISCED 5-6 | 10.5 | 8.4 | 16.9 | 3.0 | 5.3 | 8.9 | 11.4 | 18.9 | 16.7 | 14.3 | 7.7 | 7.7 | 9.5 | 13.2 | 18.4 | 12.9 | 8.5 |
| | HU | MT | NL | AT | PL | PT | RO | SI | SK | FI | SE | UK | CH | IS | LI | NO | TR |
| ISCED 0-2 | 92.7 | 50.7 | 41.9 | 50.6 | 71.0 | 46.5 | 84.3 | 60.4 | 90.7 | 41.5 | 66.5 | 74.5 | 54.9 | 32.2 | : | 50.2 | : |
| ISCED 3-4 | 43.2 | 18.2 | 18.7 | 22.1 | 37.9 | 20.1 | 46.6 | 25.7 | 27.5 | 21.2 | 20.9 | 41.3 | 22.5 | 24.0 | : | 14.8 | : |
| ISCED 5-6 | 11.5 | 6.4 | 12.7 | 14.7 | 10.0 | 8.4 | 8.7 | 5.1 | 13.0 | 4.9 | 8.6 | 14.0 | 8.4 | 8.6 | : | 5.6 | : |

Source: Eurostat, EU-SILC [ilc_peps60] (data extracted June 2014).

Explanatory notes

This indicator takes into account the percentage of children below the age of 18 who are at risk of poverty or social exclusion and whose parents' level of education is equivalent **either** to pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education (1997 ISCED levels 0-2) **or** to upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED 1997 levels 3-4) **or** to first and second stage of tertiary education (ISCED 1997 levels 5-6).

The 'At risk of poverty or social exclusion' indicator refers to the situation of people either at risk of poverty, or severely materially deprived; or living in a household with a very low work intensity. For full definition of the '**At risk of poverty or social exclusion**' indicator, see the Glossary.

Country specific notes

EU-28: Estimated.

Ireland, Croatia and Switzerland: Data from 2012.

On average, six out of ten children in the EU-28 Member States whose parents have a low level of education are at risk of poverty and social exclusion, and because of this might be at risk of educational disadvantage. The largest proportion of children under the age of 18 who are risk of poverty and social exclusion, and whose parents' level of education is low, live in central and eastern

European countries (except Estonia, Latvia, Poland and Slovenia). All these countries display percentages exceeding 75 %. This does not mean that children in these circumstances will necessarily leave education and training prematurely, however their socio-economic and family situation may well be a risk factor. Countries such as the Netherlands, Portugal, Finland and Iceland have rates below 50 %.

As a comparison, 32.2 % of children with parents who have ISCED 3-4 level of education are at risk of poverty or social exclusion, but only 10.5 % of children whose parents have reached ISCED 5-6. In all countries, the risk of poverty or social exclusion of children in this age group therefore decreases with a higher level of parental education.

There is a higher concentration of young people leaving education and training early in what is generally referred to as 'disadvantaged areas'. Living in a geographical area with high unemployment or in remote areas and small cities (as compared to living in medium-sized or large cities) increases the chance of becoming an early leaver (Eurofound, 2012). Dale (2009) put forward the same premise. He refers to the clustering of young people of certain family backgrounds and communities with particular patterns of occupation, migrant/minority origins, low levels of educational achievement and low income that produces a certain form of class and ethnic 'ghettoisation' with increased risk of and consequences for early leaving.

In **Greece**, ELET rates in lower secondary education (*Gymnasio*) are lower in urban areas than suburban and rural areas. Overall, the highest ELET rates (primary and secondary education) appear in regions with special socio-economic features, e.g. with large population groups that are more likely to present dropout incidents like Roma students, immigrant students, and students from rural areas (Rousseas and Vretakou/Hellenic Pedagogical Institute, 2006).

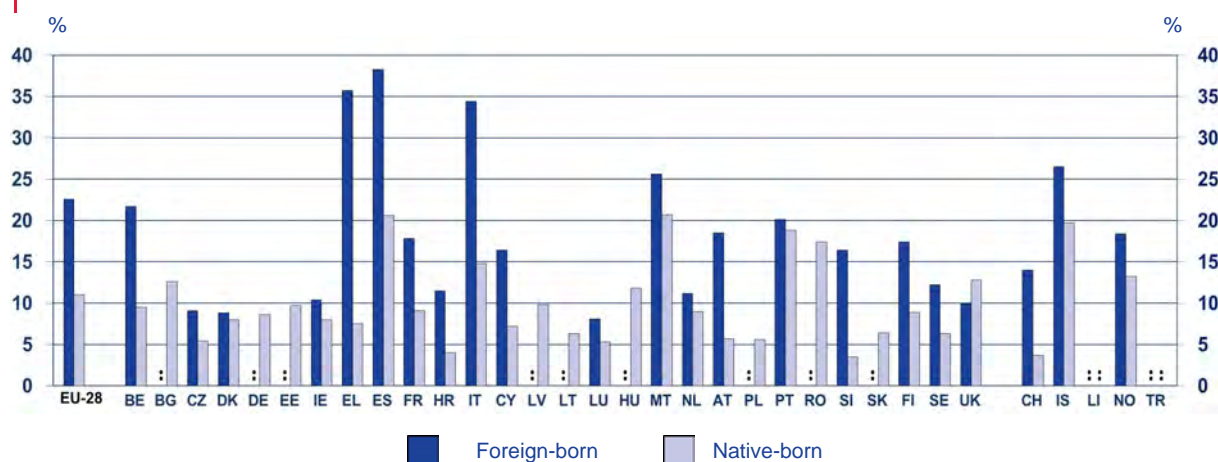
In **France**, as another example, wide differences in ELET rates exist not only between regions, but also within the same region. These differences reflect the territorial inequalities in living conditions, as measured by low family incomes and low levels of parental education, high levels of unemployment, as well as the proportion of families living in social housing, families with numerous children and single-parent families (Boudesseul et al., 2012).

In **Malta**, a research study confirms that early leaving could be a consequence of a number of diverse inter-related socio-economic inequalities concentrated in particular districts. These inequalities by themselves do not necessarily determine whether young individuals stay in or leave school early, however when correlated with each other they tend to render early leaving more likely (Gatt, 2012).

Migrant and minority backgrounds

Migration flows have contributed to the growing diversity of the European population and have considerably changed its dynamics in recent years. Different countries have different concepts of what it means to have a 'foreign background'; likewise all countries have their own ways of collecting information, which makes it difficult to gather comparable data (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2014). The data in Figure 2.2 relate to the country of birth of students leaving education and training early: those born abroad (defined as foreign-born) and those born in the country of residence (defined as native-born). However, much of the literature discussed here refers to students' ethnic origin, rather than country of birth, although some authors make distinctions between first and second generation migrants.

Empirically, young people born abroad are largely over-represented among the early leavers from education and training in many European countries. The rates are particularly high in Greece, Spain and Italy (see Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2: Percentage of early leavers from education and training by origin (foreign-born and native), 2013

| % | EU-28 | BE | BG | CZ | DK | DE | EE | IE | EL | ES | FR | HR | IT | CY | LV | LT | LU |
|---------------------|-------|------|------|------|-----|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-----|------|-----|
| Foreign-born | 22.6 | 21.7 | : | 9.1 | 8.8 | : | : | 10.4 | 35.7 | 38.3 | 17.8 | 11.5 | 34.4 | 16.4 | : | : | 8.1 |
| Native-born | 11.0 | 9.5 | 12.6 | 5.4 | 8.0 | 8.6 | 9.7 | 8.0 | 7.5 | 20.6 | 9.1 | 4.0 | 14.8 | 7.2 | 9.8 | 6.3 | 5.3 |
| | HU | MT | NL | AT | PL | PT | RO | SI | SK | FI | SE | UK | CH | IS | LI | NO | TR |
| Foreign-born | : | 25.6 | 11.2 | 18.5 | : | 20.1 | : | 16.4 | : | 17.4 | 12.2 | 9.9 | 14.0 | 26.5 | : | 18.4 | : |
| Native-born | 11.8 | 20.7 | 9.0 | 5.7 | 5.6 | 18.8 | 17.4 | 3.5 | 6.4 | 8.9 | 6.3 | 12.8 | 3.7 | 19.7 | : | 13.2 | : |

Source: Eurostat. EU-LFS [edat_lfse_02] (data extracted October 2014).

Explanatory note

Foreign-born⁽¹⁾ is a person whose place of birth (or usual residence of the mother at the time of the birth) is outside the country of his/her usual residence.

Native-born is a person whose place of birth (or usual residence of the mother at the time of the birth) is the country of his/her usual residence.

Country specific note

Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Croatia, Latvia, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia and Finland: Low reliability of data for foreign-born.

The proportion of foreign-born compared to those born in the reporting country is nearly three to five times as high in Greece, Slovenia, Croatia, Austria and Switzerland. In Belgium, Spain, France, Italy, Cyprus, Finland and Sweden, the rates of early leavers among foreign-born students are still around twice as high. The latter is comparable with the EU-28 average of 22.6 % amongst foreign-born students versus 11.0 % for the native student population. In Denmark, Ireland, Malta, the Netherlands and Portugal, the differences between the two groups are relatively lower, even though in some of these countries, high rates of migrants exist. Finally, one country stands out as an exception: the United Kingdom has a slightly higher rate of students leaving education and training early among those born in the country.

According to a study carried out in **Spain**, being of foreign origin increases the probability of leaving education early by 16 % (IVIE, 2013). In 2013, the ELET rate of students with foreign nationality was nearly twice the rate of Spanish students. However, this does not seem to wholly explain the early leaving trend in Spain, as the percentage of migrant students alone does not account for the differences in the ELET rates between the Autonomous Communities (Ministry of Education, Social Policy and Sport, 2008). Furthermore, the study carried out by Afsa (2012) in France, reveals that children of migrants are no more prone to early leaving than other (non-migrant) children.

(1) http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/themes/29_early_school_leaving.pdf

Traag and van der Velden (2011), who carried out a study in the **Netherlands**, suggest that students from ethnic minorities are more at risk of leaving school prematurely than the rest of the student population because they may lack what they refer to as 'human capital' that provides a cognitively stimulating learning environment in which the child develops. This 'human capital' is measured in terms of parental educational attainment levels; the higher parents' educational level is, the less likely the child is to drop out of school (see also previous section on socio-economic background). They state that in the context of the Netherlands, second generation migrants generally have lower educational levels than the rest of the student population and this may have an impact on their employment prospects. Furthermore, children from migrant backgrounds are less likely to attend early childhood education, which proves beneficial in developing the language skills of their host country and is a key factor for students' success at school.

Non-participation in ECEC, difficulties in accessing high quality education, not least as a result of socio-economic segregation (as explained in the following section), lack of parental support and insufficient skills in the language of instruction, all have an impact on the attainment of migrant students (European Commission, 2013b). Educational approaches and teaching methods that do not pay sufficient attention to the needs of migrant students, as well as ethnic discrimination in some educational institutions may further impede students' chances of success in school (Luciak, 2004).

In terms of ethno-cultural minority groups, Roma and Irish Travellers have often been identified as being among the most disadvantaged groups in education and consequently at greater risk of leaving school early (Luciak, 2006; Jugović and Doolan, 2013). According to research results presented in a Hungarian study by Kertesi-Kézdi (2010), for example, about 50 % of the total Roma population finishes upper secondary school, which is still very low compared to the 85 % of the non-Roma population. As Roma and traveller communities are a particularly vulnerable group in terms of participation in education and achieving success, they are therefore at greater risk of leaving school early. A number of countries ⁽²⁾ have implemented targeted policies and measures to reduce ELET rates amongst this group (see Chapter 3, Section 3.3).

Although some common problems among students from migrant/minority backgrounds, such as language and cultural barriers, can lead to educational disadvantage and potential risk of early leaving, they can also be quite easily identified and tackled. Students with a migrant background constitute a rather heterogeneous group and diversity prevails over common characteristics. For instance, differences exist between newly arrived migrant children and second generation migrants. The latter group usually experiences greater success at school than the recent arrivals (Luciak, 2004). Furthermore, although differences within and between ethnic minority groups are difficult to trace, data on school completion rates in the United Kingdom (England), for instance, show that students from certain ethnic backgrounds, for example, those of Chinese and Indian origin perform better in education than students of African Caribbean, Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin, or Roma and Traveller students (Luciak, 2006). Statistical data from the United Kingdom shows that if appropriate support is given to these groups, they can achieve higher attainment levels than the average student attainment ⁽³⁾.

In fact, it is the socio-economic/family background and having adequate learning support that seems to play a more critical role in successful educational outcomes rather than the 'migrant' or 'non-migrant' background (European Commission, 2013b). In this sense, having a 'foreign' origin does not inevitably put students at risk of early leaving. Nevertheless, the fact that the migrant population is relatively more affected by socio-economic disadvantage than the population as a whole must be taken into account, and this could explain the lower performance and attainment of migrant children at school (European Commission, 2013b).

⁽²⁾ Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany (some *Länder*), Ireland, Greece, Spain, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Lithuania, Latvia, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia and Finland

⁽³⁾ http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/themes/29_early_school_leaving.pdf

Gender

According to Traag and van der Velden (2011), in comparison to girls, boys are almost twice as likely to leave school with low or no qualifications. International and national research confirms that male students are more likely to be early leavers than female students (European Commission, 2009; EACEA/Eurydice, 2009; ROA 2013; de Witte et al., 2013; see Chapter 6 for more information on the impact of gender on ELVET).

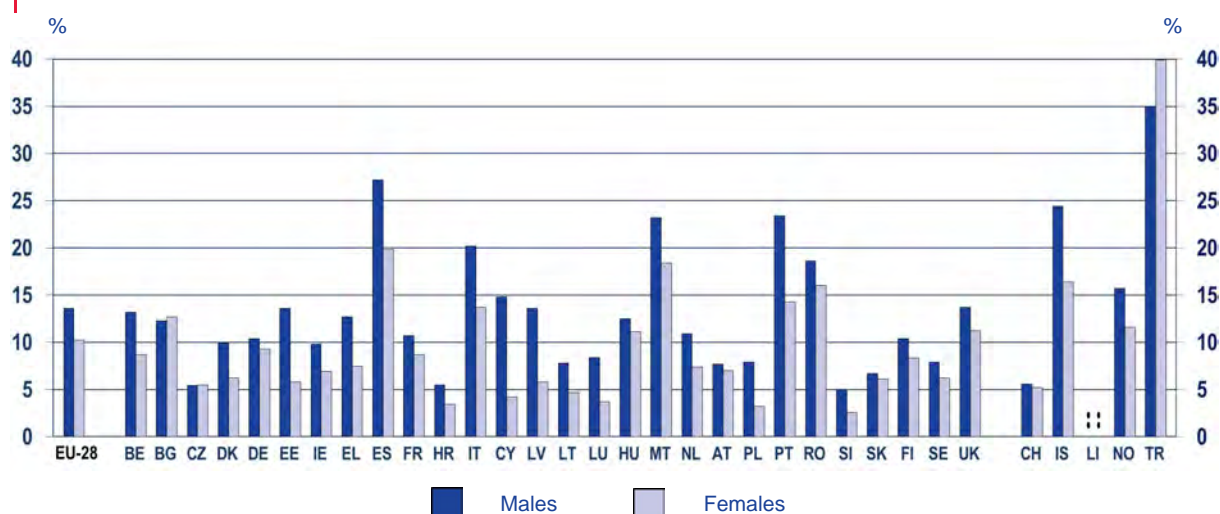
In **Greece**, boys in lower secondary, general upper secondary and in technical vocational education, throughout all geographical areas (urban, suburban, rural) present higher ELET rates compared to girls. This difference is even higher in rural areas (Rousseas and Vretakou/Hellenic Pedagogical Institute, 2006).

Data collected by the Ministry of Education in **Italy** in 2013 through the students' register also confirmed that males are more at risk of leaving school than female students.

The most recent rates for male and female early leavers from education and training across Europe corroborate this finding as they demonstrate a consistent gender pattern (see Figure 2.3). The EU-28 average of males aged 18-24 with lower secondary education at most and who are not in further education or training is 13.6 %, versus 10.2 % for females. Although there are some discrepancies between European countries, in almost all countries, the rates of male early leavers are higher than the rates for females. For Cyprus the difference is more than 10 percentage points. Other countries with high disparities between male and female rates are Estonia, Spain, Italy, Latvia, Portugal and Iceland, with differences varying from 6.5 to 9.1 percentage points. In only a few countries (Slovakia, Austria and Switzerland), the difference in rates between male and female early leavers is below 1.0 percentage point.

Two countries (Bulgaria and Turkey) reveal the opposite trend. The figures show slightly higher rates of early leaving for females than for male students, with differences of 0.4 for Bulgaria and 4.9 for Turkey. Cemalcilar and Goksen (2012) explain that girls in Turkey either do not attend any school or they leave very early. According to these authors, persisting gender differences in educational outcomes in Turkey are due to the interrelated effects of macro-structures (e.g. limited labour market participation of women), family factors and cultural expectations towards girls.

Figure 2.3: Percentage of early leavers from education and training by sex, 2013



Source: Eurostat, EU_LFS [edat_lfse_14] (data extracted October 2014).

Data (Figure 2.3)

| % | EU-28 | BE | BG | CZ | DK | DE | EE | IE | EL | ES | FR | HR | IT | CY | LV | LT | LU |
|----------------|-------|------|------|-----|-----|------|------|-----|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Males | 13.6 | 13.2 | 12.3 | 5.4 | 9.9 | 10.4 | 13.6 | 9.8 | 12.7 | 27.2 | 10.7 | 5.5 | 20.2 | 14.8 | 13.6 | 7.8 | 8.4 |
| Females | 10.2 | 8.7 | 12.7 | 5.5 | 6.2 | 9.3 | 5.8 | 6.9 | 7.5 | 19.8 | 8.7 | 3.4 | 13.7 | 4.2 | 5.8 | 4.7 | 3.7 |
| | HU | MT | NL | AT | PL | PT | RO | SI | SK | FI | SE | UK | CH | IS | LI | NO | TR |
| Males | 12.5 | 23.2 | 10.9 | 7.7 | 7.9 | 23.4 | 18.6 | 5.0 | 6.7 | 10.4 | 7.9 | 13.7 | 5.6 | 24.4 | : | 15.7 | 35.0 |
| Females | 11.1 | 18.4 | 7.4 | 7.0 | 3.2 | 14.3 | 16.0 | 2.6 | 6.1 | 8.3 | 6.2 | 11.2 | 5.2 | 16.4 | : | 11.6 | 39.9 |

Source: Eurostat, EU_LFS [edat_lfse_14] (data extracted October 2014).

Country specific notes

Croatia: Low reliability of data.

Lithuania, Luxembourg and Slovenia: Low reliability of data for female early leavers.

The fact that males are over-represented among the students leaving education and training early also suggests a strong link between gender and educational achievement. Indeed, girls tend to outperform boys at school, and more girls than boys receive upper secondary education (OECD, 2012). This may generally arise from the different experiences of boys and girls in compulsory education. It is believed, for instance, that boys are prone to more difficulties than girls in adapting to the school environment (Nevala et al., 2011).

International assessments of student achievement reveal that girls have a visible advantage over boys in reading. Boys on the other hand perform better in mathematics and science than girls. However, both boys and girls can equally be affected by socio-economic disadvantage, which in turn increases the risk of low attainment. Gender, therefore, constitutes only one of numerous factors accounting for the variations in educational achievement in different subject fields. In fact, socio-economic background and status seems to be a stronger predictor of educational achievement than gender alone (EACEA/Eurydice, 2010).

Dumais (2002) considers that students with a higher socio-economic status tend to do better at school and the higher the socio-economic status of an individual, the less likely gender comes in to play. Along similar lines, Flouri and Ereky-Stevens (2008) put forward the premise that although boys from 'poor' or 'average' neighbourhoods are more likely to leave school after compulsory education than girls living in the same neighbourhood, the gender difference in 'well-to-do' neighbourhoods seems to be insignificant.

In their analysis, Beekhoven and Dekkers (2005) conclude that parents of children from a higher socio-economic background have the knowledge and financial resources to give their children better help throughout their education than parents with limited cultural, social and economic capital. Furthermore, the lack of certain resources (i.e. cultural and social capital) seems to be more significant in explaining early leaving from education and training when it comes to boys. Beekhoven and Dekkers (2005), advise that these findings should be treated with caution as the sample size they used for their analysis is relatively small and other variables may considerably influence these results. Finally, differences in motivation and attitudes amongst boys and girls can have an impact on educational performance and may therefore represent another risk factor leading to early leaving (EACEA/Eurydice, 2010). As with migrant status, therefore, gender alone is not a determining factor.

2.2. Education system related factors

Education policies that encourage a stimulating learning environment for all learners, and especially for those who are struggling in school as a result of their individual circumstances and/or family background, can contribute to preventing early leaving. Education and training systems can create this type of learning environment if students are placed at the centre of the learning process and if teaching, learning and support is personalised in order to respond to students' individual needs and talents.

Some school-related factors that have an impact on early leaving are not discussed in detail here. These concern the school climate, including conflicts with teachers, violence in school, bullying, etc. Furthermore, individuals' school-related problems are not elaborated here; however, they often play a role in students' decision to leave school early. In Croatia, for example, some of the most commonly reported reasons for early leaving are: low educational achievement, lack of motivation and discipline problems (Feric et al., 2010). Similarly, in France, student achievement has been reported as one of the main predictive factors of early leaving, after controlling for the effects of socio-economic background and grade retention (Afsa, 2012).

The features of education systems discussed below, which can have a negative impact on ELET rates include grade retention, the socio-economic segregation of schools and early tracking. In contrast, other highlighted features, which have a positive effect on preventing or reducing early leaving, are high quality early childhood education and care and well-designed primary and secondary education.

Grade retention

Grade retention describes the process of holding students back to repeat a year when they are considered not to have made sufficient progress. The assumption is that repeating a year gives them the opportunity to acquire the knowledge they need to continue their school career successfully. In Europe, grade retention is possible according to existing regulations in the majority of education systems, even though in many countries it is rarely applied (EACEA/Eurydice, 2011).

However, grade retention does not necessarily improve academic performance. On the contrary, research results have consistently highlighted the negative effects of grade retention. They provide, in particular, evidence of the detrimental effects of grade retention on students' academic, socio-emotional and behavioural outcomes, which further increase the risk of poor performance and in many cases may lead to them to leave school prematurely (e.g. Thompson and Cunningham, 2000; Jimerson, 2001; Silbergliitt et al., 2006; Jacob and Lefgren, 2009). In Spain, students who repeat a grade show higher rates of early leaving than students who are given additional tuition and support in order to avoid repetition. Research based on the experiences of 856 early leavers revealed that 88 % left school due to their experiences of grade repetition (Mena Martínez et al., 2010).

A systematic review of seventeen studies examining factors associated with dropping out of secondary school prior to graduation confirms that grade retention is, in fact, a significant predictor of school dropout (Jimerson, Anderson, and Whipple, 2002). It is perceived by students as an extremely stressful life-event, which negatively affects their self-esteem (Anderson, Jimerson and Whipple, 2005) and thus increases school failure, high-risk behaviour and the likelihood of leaving early (Field, Kuczera and Pont, 2007; Rumberger and Lim, 2008).

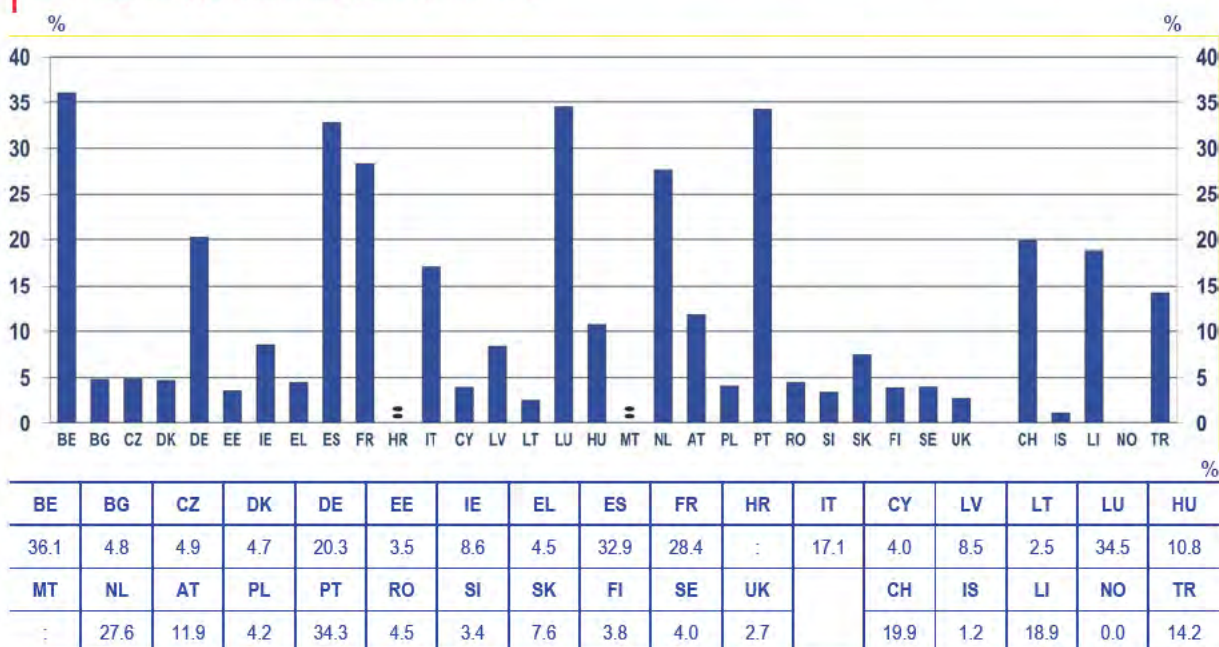
Likewise, longitudinal studies reveal that grade retention is linked to an increased risk of dropping out of school (Jimerson et al., 2002; Allensworth, 2005), together with student level variables such as low self-esteem, problematic behaviour, low academic achievement as well as family level variables such

as lower maternal educational attainment and lower maternal value of education (Jimerson et al., 2002). In other words, grade retention may harm especially those low achieving students who are already most at risk of failure (Jacob and Lefgren, 2009). As the proportion of students who fall behind as a result of grade retention is higher for those coming from disadvantaged backgrounds, repeating a year therefore also widens social inequities (OECD, 2012).

According to the OECD's 2012 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) data (see Figure 2.4), the largest proportion of students reporting that they had repeated a grade in primary, lower secondary or upper secondary school can be found in Belgium (36.1%), closely followed by Spain, Luxembourg and Portugal (all exceeding 30%). Two of these countries (Spain and Portugal) also have some of the highest levels of early leaving in Europe. In France and the Netherlands, the rates of students who repeated a grade are close to 30%. Germany and Switzerland have rates around 20%. Germany and Switzerland have rates around 20%.

At the other end of the spectrum, with the lowest rates of grade repetition (below 3%), are Croatia, Lithuania, the United Kingdom and Iceland. The rate of grade retention in Norway is nil. The existence of 'catch-up' opportunities at the end of the school year (Lithuania) or automatic progression (customary or legally-based) through compulsory education (the United Kingdom, Iceland and Norway) can partially explain the low levels of grade retention in these countries (EACEA/Eurydice, 2011). However, the wide variation of repetition rates between European countries is not only related to the different regulations in force. The practice of allowing students to repeat a year also seems to be embedded in a 'culture' of grade retention and in the common belief that repeating a year is beneficial for students' learning (ibid.).

Figure 2.4: Percentage of students reporting that they have repeated a grade at least once in primary, lower secondary or upper secondary school, PISA 2012



Source: OECD, PISA 2012 database.

Explanatory note

The OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) measures the knowledge and skills of 15-year-old students in reading, mathematics and science. In most countries, students of this age are approaching the end of compulsory education.

Finally, the financial costs of grade retention are high for both students and society. School systems must provide students with an additional year of education, and their entry to the labour market is delayed. Moreover, as a result of students' increased likelihood of leaving school early with all its associated consequences, expenditure on other public services such as health and social services may also rise (Jimerson, Pletcher and Graydon, 2006).

Socio-economic segregation of schools

A mix of students from different backgrounds in schools can be beneficial for all students, in particular for those from disadvantaged backgrounds or those whose parents have a low level of education. However, socio-economic issues are often the main cause of segregation in education, and frequently interplay with other factors such as racial or ethnic background (migrant or minority status) (European Commission, 2011a).

Segregation in education can occur for different reasons. On the one hand, it can be due to selection in the education system. Student assessment which does not take sufficient account of disadvantaged or migrant backgrounds may lead to these students being over-represented in 'disadvantaged' schools or even their referral to special education (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2009). On the other hand, the social segregation of schools may result from the tendency of different social groups to live in different areas (OECD, 2007).

Irrespective of the reason, socio-economic segregation has been shown to be problematic in many ways. School systems with a high level of segregation have worse educational achievement results (ibid.). Furthermore, more behavioural problems can be found in schools where socio-economically disadvantaged students are concentrated (Hugh, 2010). Consequently, the risk of students leaving early is considerably higher in these schools (Lyche, 2010; Traag and van der Velden, 2011; Nevala et al., 2013). The effect of socio-economic segregation on the composition of the student population in a school is, in fact, so powerful that even an average student is more likely to drop out of a school that has high levels of ELET than from a school that has more moderate ELET rates (Audas and Willms, 2001).

Early tracking

Separating students into different educational tracks or pathways on the basis of their achievement (early tracking) is another common practice in many European countries. This usually results in students being guided towards either academic or vocational programmes, which ultimately lead to different educational and career prospects.

Those in favour of tracking suggest that students learn better in homogeneous classrooms that follow a curriculum and instruction appropriate to their abilities. However, research shows that separating students too early has a strong negative impact on those placed in tracks that do not correspond to their potential and/or aspirations (Hattie, 2009). It appears to increase differences and inequalities in student achievement (Hanuschek and Wößmann, 2006; OECD, 2012).

Disadvantaged students, such as those from migrant or minority backgrounds, are particularly affected by early tracking as they are frequently placed in the least academically oriented tracks at an early stage, i.e. before they have had the opportunity to develop the linguistic, social and cultural skills to reach their potential (Spinath and Spinath, 2005; OECD, 2010). In combination with a rigid education system offering limited permeability of educational pathways, students with lower academic performance may, consequently, lose the motivation to remain in education and training (European Commission, 2011a).

Early tracking can trigger a vicious cycle in teachers' and students' expectations. Teachers can have lower expectations from low-performing students; and students consequently adjust their expectations and efforts (OECD, 2010). Moreover, students cease to benefit from the positive influence of being around their more advanced peers (Hanuschek and Wößmann, 2006; Rumberger and Lim, 2008). Finally, more experienced and competent teachers tend to teach in more academic education institutions (OECD, 2010). As a result, students who find themselves in a wrong track often experience a negative learning experience; they may also experience stigmatisation, a decrease in their self-esteem and motivation, and thus run a higher risk of early leaving from education and training (European Commission, 2013a).

Early childhood education and care

The importance and need for high quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) – provision for children between birth and compulsory school age – has been strongly emphasised by various EU initiatives. The 2011 Council Conclusions on ECEC ⁽⁴⁾ highlighted a wide range of short- and long-term benefits for both individuals and society. It is well acknowledged that exposure to high quality ECEC favours success in a child's future education (Mullis et al., 2012; OECD, 2011). It constitutes a fundamental first step in a long process of lifelong learning and is a key element in preventing early leaving and low achievement (European Commission, 2012). High quality ECEC can therefore not only enable and empower all children to realise their potential, but can also help to achieve the EU 2020 headline target of reducing early school leaving to below 10 % by providing strong foundations for successful lifelong learning.

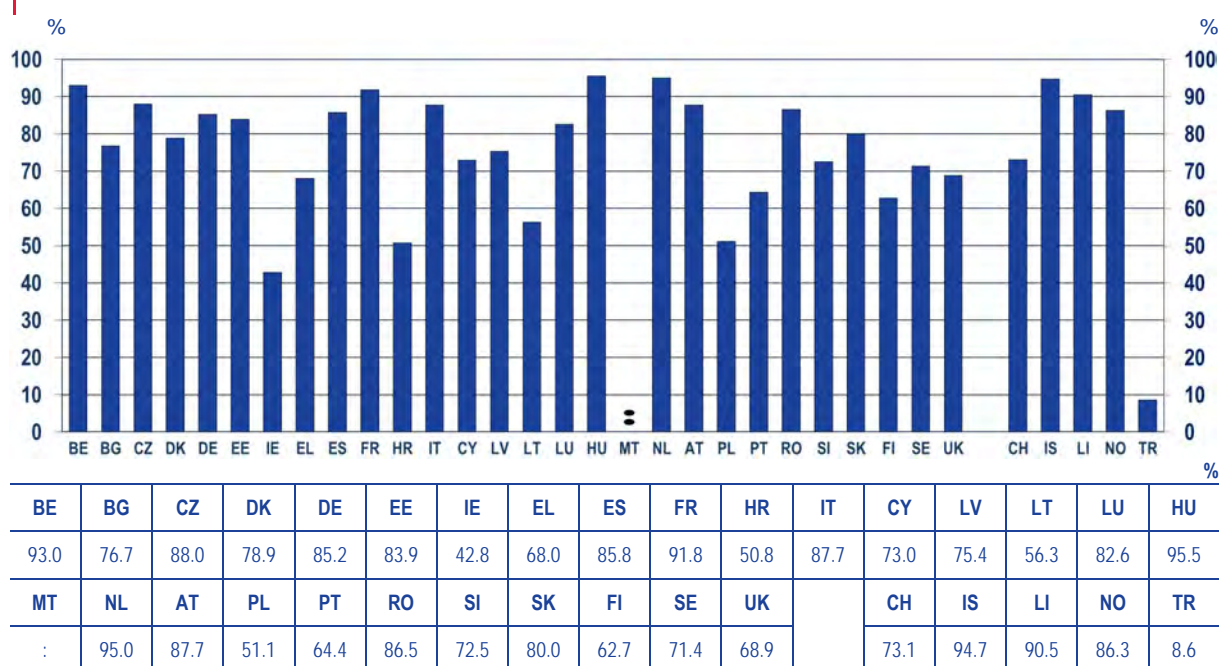
High quality ECEC is particularly beneficial for children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and serves as an essential starting point for building equitable educational systems. Participation in ECEC from a very young age can, for instance, improve the language skills of migrant children whose first language is often not the language of instruction at school. It also improves the likelihood that these children will be successful in their education, and reduces the risk of them becoming socially excluded (European Council, 2011; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2014). Increased participation in ECEC, especially by vulnerable children, can also bring benefits in terms of higher employment and higher earnings later in life (State Services Commission, 2012).

Results from the latest PISA survey in 2012 show that around 95 % of 15-year-old students in Hungary, the Netherlands and Iceland reported that they had attended ECEC for more than a year (see Figure 2.5). They are closely followed by Belgium, France and Liechtenstein with over 90 %. Croatia, Lithuania, Poland, however, have participation rates of less than 60 % and Ireland 42.8 %. The lowest student participation in ECEC has been recorded in Turkey (8.6 %).

Lower participation rates in countries such as Croatia, Lithuania, and Turkey could partially be explained by the fact that there is no place guarantee to ECEC. However, other countries with similar regulations on pre-primary attendance such as Italy, Romania, Slovakia and Iceland have relatively high participation rates of above 80 %. Affordability, accessibility of ECEC provision, cultural issues, the starting age of compulsory primary education as well as family SES also have a strong influence on children's participation in ECEC (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2014).

⁽⁴⁾ Council conclusions on early childhood education and care: providing all our children with the best start for the world of tomorrow, OJ C 175, 15.6.2011.

Figure 2.5: Percentage of students reporting that they had attended ECEC (pre-primary education, ISCED 0), for more than one year, PISA 2012



Source: OECD, PISA 2012 database.

Explanatory note

The OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) measures the knowledge and skills of 15-year-old students in reading, mathematics and science. In most countries, students of this age are approaching the end of compulsory education.

Data gathered in international student achievement surveys (PISA and PIRLS) clearly show the benefits of ECEC attendance. In the participating European countries, students who attended ECEC in their childhood, on average, outperform those who did not by 35 points, which corresponds to nearly one full year of formal schooling. Evidence from PIRLS 2011 indicates that children who have spent longer periods in ECEC are better prepared to enter and succeed in primary education. For most of the European countries participating in PIRLS 2011, the data shows that the more time a child spends in ECEC, the better their reading results (Mullis et al., 2012; European Commission/ EACEA/Eurydice, 2014).

Needless to say, widening access to ECEC and maintaining or improving its quality is a prerequisite for the successful integration of children, especially those from vulnerable backgrounds, into the school system and for preventing early leaving (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2013).

Transition to upper secondary education

Research suggests that general upper secondary education is not sufficiently responsive to students' needs. Some students drop out of upper secondary education as they do not find the traditional style of academic teaching sufficiently appealing (Field et al, 2007). The challenge then is to offer attractive and relevant educational pathways to encourage young people to stay in school or training and gain an upper secondary qualification (OECD, 2012).

The curriculum is considered to have an important role to play in engaging students in education (Lamb, 2008 quoted in Dale, 2009; Cedefop, 2012). To be structurally flexible, some researchers suggest the need for curricular reform to make it more relevant for young people, reflect changing labour market demands, as well as responding to the demands of employers (Cedefop, 2011; Dale,

2009; Lamb, 2008; OECD, 2012). Research carried out in Malta confirms that a perception among young people that the curriculum is irrelevant and unappealing explains why many of them leave education before achieving a qualification (Ministry of Education and Employment (MT), 2012).

A study carried out in Greece (Rousseas and Vretakou/Hellenic Pedagogical Institute, 2006) stresses the failure of educational programmes to support students with learning difficulties or to address the labour market needs. It reveals that education and training systems are not providing students at risk with enough targeted support to meet their educational, emotional and social needs. Consequently, they feel unable to remain in education and training. Furthermore, early leaving from education and training is a long process of 'disengagement' from school and learning. Often, this process begins as early as primary education, following the first experiences of school failure and growing alienation from school. The transition to the next level of education is particularly difficult for students who are struggling at school. The disconnection between educational programmes and labour market needs increases the risk of student disengagement, as they have little confidence that their schooling will be of benefit when they eventually need to find work.

Lack of flexibility in the transition between compulsory and post-compulsory education can prove to be particularly challenging and may thus increase the probability of students' leaving education or training early. In most countries, having a lower secondary education certificate is a prerequisite for continuing to study at post-compulsory level (Field et al, 2007). Diversifying the range of opportunities available to students within compulsory education, as well as providing a broader selection of courses after compulsory education might reduce the risk of early leaving as it could motivate students and provide them with pathways other than the traditional ones (GHK, 2005; Lamb, 2008; see also Chapter 6 on VET).

Another important structural issue is that educational systems may not allow students to transfer between pathways (academic, technical or vocational). Students who make a mistake in their choice of study or who subsequently change their interests may not have the opportunity to change or start another track/programme due to a lack of equivalence and transferability between them. These students may find themselves 'locked out' and may lose the motivation to either finish the programme they started or continue their studies after compulsory education. Having a limited choice of study and being 'locked' in programmes that are inappropriate has also been mentioned in a study carried out in France (Antonmattei and Fouquet, 2011). This lack of flexibility within the educational system and limited choice of pathways may result in dropout (OECD, 2012; European Commission, 2013a).

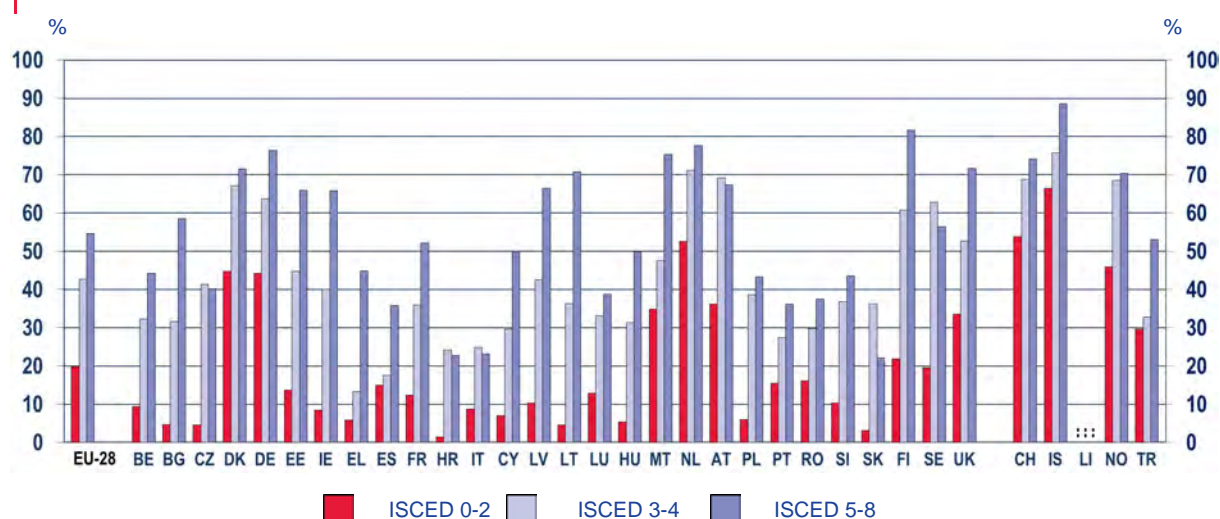
Even though flexible pathways exist in some countries, education and career counselling and guidance services may not always provide adequate support to students who wish to choose alternative pathways to academic learning (Field et al, 2007). Advice and guidance (discussed in detail in Chapter 5) proves to be of a vital importance in helping students choose the right educational and career path and, in so doing, reduces the risk of early leaving due to mistakes made by students in choosing the right course of study (European Commission, 2011a; Cedefop, 2010).

2.3. Labour market factors

According to economic theory, labour market conditions have an impact on students' choices when deciding whether to stay on or leave school (Tumino & Taylor, 2013). The choices they make, however, can have a significant impact on their career.

Figure 2.6, on the employment of 15-24 year-olds by level of education, shows that young people with a low level of education, i.e. ISCED 0-2, are much less likely to be in employment than those who have completed education at ISCED levels 3-4 or 5-8. In the EU-28, on average, 19.7 % of young people with lower secondary education at most are in employment, compared to 42.7 % of young people who have gained an upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary qualification, and 54.6 % of tertiary graduates. The higher the educational level of a student, therefore, the higher his/her chances are of finding employment.

Figure 2.6: Employment rates of 15-24 year olds by levels of education (2011 ISCED 0-2, 3-4 and 5-8), 2013



| % | EU-28 | BE | BG | CZ | DK | DE | EE | IE | EL | ES | FR | HR | IT | CY | LV | LT | LU |
|------------------|-------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| ISCED 0-2 | 19.7 | 9.3 | 4.7 | 4.5 | 44.8 | 44.2 | 13.7 | 8.4 | 5.8 | 15.0 | 12.3 | 1.4 | 8.7 | 7.0 | 10.3 | 4.6 | 12.9 |
| ISCED 3-4 | 42.7 | 32.2 | 31.6 | 41.4 | 67.1 | 63.7 | 44.8 | 40.0 | 13.2 | 17.6 | 35.9 | 24.2 | 24.8 | 29.6 | 42.5 | 36.3 | 33.1 |
| ISCED 5-8 | 54.6 | 44.2 | 58.5 | 40.2 | 71.5 | 76.3 | 65.9 | 65.8 | 44.9 | 35.8 | 52.2 | 22.7 | 23.1 | 49.7 | 66.5 | 70.8 | 38.8 |
| | HU | MT | NL | AT | PL | PT | RO | SI | SK | FI | SE | UK | CH | IS | LI | NO | TR |
| ISCED 0-2 | 5.3 | 34.9 | 52.5 | 36.2 | 6.0 | 15.5 | 16.1 | 10.3 | 3.1 | 21.9 | 19.5 | 33.6 | 53.9 | 66.4 | : | 45.9 | 29.6 |
| ISCED 3-4 | 31.3 | 47.6 | 71.1 | 69.2 | 38.6 | 27.5 | 29.8 | 36.8 | 36.3 | 60.7 | 62.8 | 52.7 | 68.8 | 75.7 | : | 68.5 | 32.8 |
| ISCED 5-8 | 50.0 | 75.3 | 77.7 | 67.4 | 43.3 | 36.1 | 37.5 | 43.6 | 22.1 | 81.7 | 56.5 | 71.6 | 74.1 | 88.6 | : | 70.3 | 53.0 |

Source: Eurostat, EU-LFS [lfsa_ergaed] (data extracted October 2014).

Explanatory note

Employment rate represents employed/active persons as a percentage of same age total population.

Employed persons are persons aged 15 and over who performed work, even for just one hour per week, for pay, profit or family gain during the reference week or were not at work but had a job or business from which they were temporarily absent because of, for instance, illness, holidays, industrial dispute, or education or training.

2011 ISCED 0-2: Less than primary, primary and lower secondary (levels 0-2).

2011 ISCED 3-4: Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary (levels 3 and 4).

2011 ISCED 5-8: Short-cycle tertiary, bachelor or equivalent, master or equivalent and doctoral or equivalent (levels 5-8).

Country specific note

Croatia: Low reliability of data for ISCED 0-2 and 5-8.

Labour market conditions can also influence young people's decision to leave school early. Depending on the economic context, the labour market can act as 'pull' or 'push' factor in the ELET process (Nevala et al., 2011). For instance, high levels of employment opportunities, or regional and seasonal labour markets (such as tourism or construction), can encourage young people to leave school early in order to improve their family's economic situation or to enable them to become more independent (European Commission, 2011b). In Greece, for example, tourist areas where young people are employed seasonally are the ones that are more prone to high rates of early leaving (Rousseas and Vretakou/Hellenic Pedagogical Institute, 2006).

High levels of unemployment may, however, influence students' decisions in a similar way: if they observe that the probability of unemployment is high regardless of qualifications they may be less inclined to remain in school. If, on the other hand, students note that those with qualifications face fewer problems in the labour market, they may be more likely to continue in education and add to their human capital (De Witte et al., 2013).

Some national research supports this theory. Evidence from the United Kingdom as well as Spain found positive and statistically significant effects of unemployment on the probability of remaining in education (Petrongolo and San Segundo, 2002; Clark, 2011; Meschi, Swaffield and Vignoles, 2011; Tumino and Taylor, 2013). Moreover, the relationship was found to be stronger for men than women. The same research evidence also showed that youth unemployment, in particular, leads to lower rates of early leaving in these countries, whereas high adult unemployment tends to increase dropout rates.

Finally, a well-developed vocational education sector may help prevent students from leaving the system early. In the presence of attractive labour market opportunities for graduates of vocational education, students may be more inclined to stay on and graduate at upper secondary level (Shavit and Muller, 2000; Lavrijsen, 2012; see also Chapter 6 on VET).

CHAPTER 3: STRATEGIES, POLICIES AND MEASURES AGAINST EARLY LEAVING

In June 2011, the Education Council adopted a Recommendation on policies to reduce the number of students leaving education and training early ⁽¹⁾. It highlighted the need for targeted and effective evidence-based policies based on national circumstances, and recommended that Member States should introduce a comprehensive strategy to address the problem. The strategy should cover all levels of education and involve all relevant policy areas and stakeholders. It should seek a balanced approach towards prevention, intervention and compensation and should include appropriate measures to meet the needs of high risk groups.

Across Europe, six countries/regions (Belgium (Flemish Community), Bulgaria, Spain, Malta, the Netherlands and Austria) have, to date, developed a comprehensive strategy of this nature. Four countries developed their strategy following the 2011 Recommendation by the Education Council, but Spain and the Netherlands introduced theirs earlier. Two other countries (Hungary and Romania) are in the process of adopting a comprehensive strategy. In several other countries (Germany, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, the United Kingdom and Norway), while there is no comprehensive strategy as described above, there are other broad strategies or action plans to ensure that young people and adults have the opportunity to complete their education and gain the qualifications they need to succeed in the workplace. Section one explores the nature of all existing strategies.

All countries, have however, introduced policies and measures that have either been developed specifically to address early leaving, or are part of general/on-going initiatives which contribute to reducing early leaving rates. The second section, therefore, examines all of these policies and measures, regardless of the framework that surrounds them. They are categorised under the key headings adopted by the Council Recommendation – prevention, intervention and compensation (see definitions below). The analysis shows that, in an effort to prevent early leaving, most countries aim to improve teaching and learning starting from early childhood education and care and they provide education and career guidance; countries' intervention policies and measures focus mainly on providing individual support to students, especially those who are low achieving; and in the area of compensation measures, most initiatives aim to identify early leavers from education and training and to help them re-enter education and training.

Finally, the last section of this chapter takes a look at policies and measures targeting specific groups at higher risk of early leaving. These are, in most cases, focused on students from disadvantaged backgrounds, but also on migrant and Roma students as well as those with special educational needs.

3.1. Strategies for tackling early leaving

In order to be effective, the Council Recommendation suggests that comprehensive strategies to combat early leaving should include three types of measures:

- Prevention measures, which aim to tackle the root problems that may eventually result in early leaving.
- Intervention measures, which aim to combat any emerging difficulties experienced by students, by improving the quality of education and training and providing targeted support.
- Compensation measures, which create new opportunities for those who have left education and training prematurely to gain qualifications.

⁽¹⁾ Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving, OJ C 191, 1.7.2011. (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2011:191:0001:0006:en:PDF>).

Moreover, comprehensive strategies to tackle early leaving should address all levels of general and vocational education (see Chapter 6 on tackling ELVET), and they should coordinate the activities of different policy areas and agencies such as youth, social/welfare, employment and health. In other words, the recommendation promotes a shift from piecemeal efforts to a more joined up, comprehensive approach.

In the six countries that have adopted a comprehensive strategy for tackling early leaving (Belgium (Flemish Community), Bulgaria, Spain, Malta, the Netherlands and Austria - see Figure 3.1), a broad range of new as well as on-going policies cover all three areas of action: prevention, intervention and compensation. However, at the same time, some of the strategies also have a particular focus. While the Belgian (Flemish Community), Maltese and Dutch strategies put a strong emphasis on prevention measures, the Austrian strategy has a well-developed compensation element (see also the National Information Sheets for a full description of all strategies).

In **Belgium (Flemish Community)**, most actions of the 'Flemish Action Plan on Early School Leaving' (launched in 2013) are in the area of prevention. They include supplying information about early leaving to schools, providing information about early leaving on the web, promoting flexible learning pathways in secondary education, improving vocational secondary education and analysing the impact of the labour market on early leaving. In addition to that, a specific section of the strategy focuses on ELET data collection as well as monitoring, reporting and raising awareness of the nature and scale of the problem among school heads and staff members through in-service training.

The **Maltese** 'Strategic Plan for the Prevention of Early School Leaving' (adopted in 2014) aims to facilitate focused actions that will support students in making the best of their school years, from early childhood to the end of compulsory school and beyond. Most of the actions of this comprehensive strategy are also focused on preventing early leaving through, amongst other things, providing free childcare, making caring community schools possible, developing e-Learning content to better respond to student learning needs, funding a school-based approach to reducing early leaving, strengthening the transition process across educational pathways, reviewing and consolidating career guidance across levels, harnessing and strengthening parental support to combat early leaving, and supporting teachers to address the early leaving challenge.

Similarly, in the **Netherlands** the policy priority of the 'Drive to Reduce Drop-out Rates' programme (in place since 2002) is to prevent students leaving school early. The main national measures include raising the leaving age of compulsory education from 16 to 18, giving a personal education number to each student to make it possible to track them and to produce statistics on ELET at national, regional, municipal and school level, creating a 'Digital Absence Portal' making it possible to register school absenteeism, implementing an 'Action plan for career orientation and guidance' (2009-2012) and measures to facilitate the transfer to secondary vocational programmes.

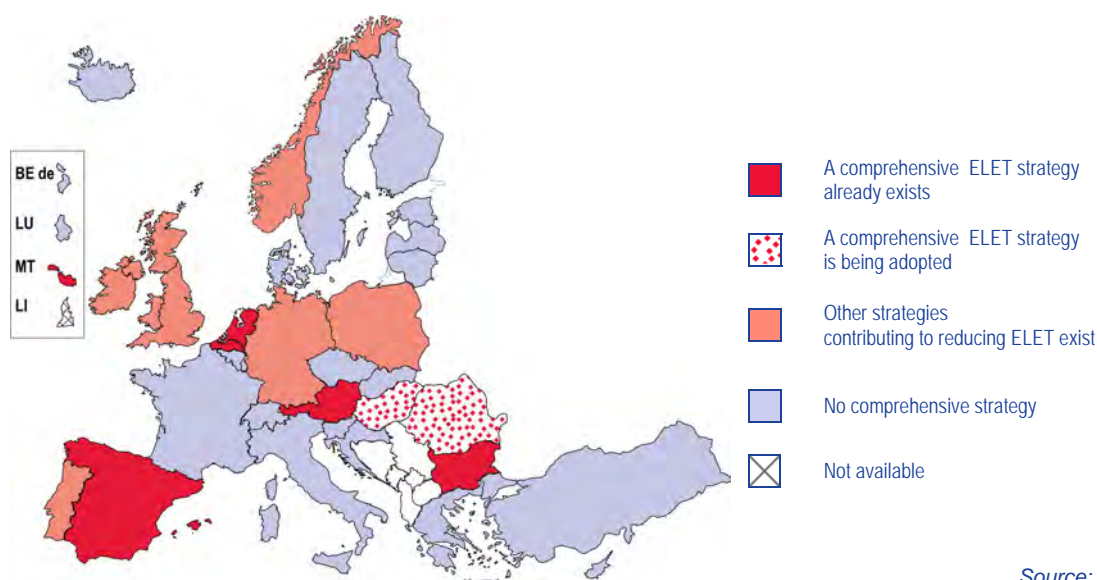
In **Austria**, the 'National Strategy to Combat Early School Leaving' (launched in 2012) refers to the three pillars of prevention, intervention and compensation, all educational levels and all target groups. By implementing the measure 'Youth Coaching', which identifies and supports students at risk, Austria has strengthened the pillars of prevention and intervention. However, the compensation measures can be seen as the key pillar of the strategy. An important measure aiming to compensate people for missing qualifications is the 'Adult Education Initiative'. As part of this initiative, basic courses leading to the compulsory school leaving certificate are offered free of charge. Other measures provide second chance education at the upper secondary level such as the 'supra-company based apprenticeship training'.

The **Bulgarian** 'Strategy for Reducing the Rate of Early School Leavers 2013-2020' recognises the need for comprehensive policies and measures to ensure the successful transition of students between different levels of education, provide flexible and effective opportunities for people who have left education to acquire key competences or participate in various forms of training, and enable the outcomes of formal education and informal learning to be recognised and validated. The strategy's objectives will be achieved through targeted measures aimed at preventing the underlying causes of early school leaving; intervening when students experience difficulties; and providing compensation measures for people who have left school early to help them re-engage in education or acquire skills.

In **Spain**, the state legislative framework for reducing early leaving is the 2006 Organic Act on Education and the new Organic Act for the Improvement of the Quality of Education (LOMCE, 9 December 2013). In 2008, the Ministry of Education and the education administrations of the Autonomous Communities drafted the 'Plan to Reduce Early School Leaving', which established the general strategy for tackling the problem in Spain. A programme called 'Programme to Reduce Early School Leaving in Education and

Training' followed. The measures carried out in the framework of this programme, and more recently within the framework of the LOMCE, are currently in force and they can be categorised as prevention, intervention and compensation measures. However, this programme does not cover all activities and all forms of collaboration between the Ministry and the Autonomous Communities in this area. Due to decentralisation, measures may be different in each Autonomous Community, although the measures that have proven effective are widely spread. Each Autonomous Community has emphasised measures to address the educational, social and economic circumstances that have the most influence on ELET rates within their territory.

Figure 3.1: Strategies for tackling early leaving from education and training, 2013/14



Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory note

A comprehensive strategy to tackle the problem of students leaving education and training early should be based on evidence and cover all levels of general and vocational education as well as training. It should balance prevention, intervention and compensation measures. Appropriate measures to meet the needs of high risk groups should be included.

Countries where a comprehensive ELET strategy is being adopted have already produced a draft, which is going to be published shortly. In countries that are in the category 'Other strategies contributing to reducing ELET exist', there is no single, comprehensive strategy to tackle the problem of ELET as defined at European level; however, these countries have developed strategies and action plans to ensure that young people and adults have the opportunity to complete their education and gain the qualifications they need to succeed in the workplace.

Country specific note

Italy: The Ministry of Education, University and Research is currently working on merging in a single framework all structural measures already implemented to tackle ELET. This plan is expected to be ready still in 2014.

Cross-sector cooperation in the form of the active involvement and cooperation of key agencies at national, regional, local and school level is crucial for reducing early leaving from education and training (see also Chapter 4 on governance and cross-sector cooperation). Agencies in each policy area have an important contribution to make in finding solutions to the problems associated with early leaving (European Commission, 2013). Cross-sector cooperation is ensured in different ways in the six countries/regions with a comprehensive early leaving strategy. In Belgium (Flemish Community), Spain, Malta and the Netherlands, a specific coordination body has either been set up already or is in the process of being set up (see Section 4.2 on coordinating bodies to tackle early leaving). In Bulgaria, the development of a 'coordination mechanism' is envisaged; while in Austria, the Ministry of Education and Women's Affairs, and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection cooperate closely on the implementation of the strategy to tackle early leaving.

Continuous and systematic monitoring and evaluation of all efforts to reduce the rate of early leavers is, moreover, essential to inform policy development, enable comparisons to be made between regions or local authorities and allow the exchange of good practice (European Commission, 2013).

All countries/regions with a comprehensive early leaving strategy report that monitoring and evaluation is a routine practice.

In **Belgium (Flemish Community)**, monitoring and evaluation is an umbrella action incorporated in the strategy. A cross-sector thematic working group meets three times a year to evaluate all actions. The Flemish Government is responsible for the overall monitoring of the plan.

The monitoring of the **Bulgarian** ELET strategy includes annual progress reports including reporting on the use of funds, analyses of the challenges faced, identification of improvement measures, updating of existing and/or development of new action plans, and informing institutions and the public about the results achieved. The final evaluation will be based on a review and analysis of the overall performance of the strategy and should give guidance on the policies that will be needed after 2020.

Within the framework of the **Spanish** programme to reduce early leaving, the Autonomous Communities report on all on-going activities and, together with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, carry out the monitoring and evaluation of the programme. The 'Sectoral Committee for Education' and the Spanish 'ET 2020' Working Group are in charge of monitoring actions related to early leaving.

In **Malta**, the strategic plan recommends empowering the Department for Research and Development within the Ministry for Education and Employment to take stock of all the relevant data collection systems and to construct a robust and structured data collection framework to monitor the real scale of early leaving and to formulate effective policies to reduce it.

In the **Netherlands**, the use of money spent is being monitored by the Ministry of Education and, in addition, a research organisation is monitoring the use and effectiveness of the budget.

In **Austria**, there is no monitoring of the implementation of the strategy as a whole, but some of the individual measures that have been put in place are subject to review.

Finally, in Belgium (Flemish Community), Bulgaria and Austria, no extra funding has been allocated for the strategy itself; whereas in Spain, Malta and the Netherlands, specific ELET budget lines for tackling early leaving have been allocated.

From 2007 to 2012, the total budget for the **Spanish** strategy was EUR 375 236 401. The strategy was co-financed by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport and the Autonomous Communities until 2010, and in 2011 and 2012 the funding came 100% from the Ministry. The funding for 2012 has covered the actions carried out up until 31 December 2013.

In **Malta**, the comprehensive strategy incorporates a number of action plans, which will be implemented and funded by the respective department. The budget is thus allocated at department level.

In the **Netherlands**, the ELET budget is allocated to each region and is approximately EUR 56 million annually in total. In addition to this budget, schools receive annual performance-related funding for contributing to the reduction of early leaving. As an extra incentive, funding is available for setting up so called 'plus facilities', especially for young people with multiple problems, i.e. those who are unable to gain a qualification due to a combination of financial, social and material problems, and who may also be in trouble with the law.

In two other countries – Hungary and Romania – comprehensive strategies for tackling early leaving are currently in the early stages.

In **Hungary**, the "Government Resolution 1603/2014 (XI.4.)" on the adoption of a comprehensive early leaving strategy was published on 4 November; however, the text of the strategy was not yet available at the time of publication of this report. Measures included in the strategy aim to tackle early leaving by improving students' skills and competences, improving the rate of school success, fostering employability and ensuring a smooth transition to the labour market. One of the most important measures is the introduction of an ELET data collection and early warning system. Measures apply to all education levels from early childhood to upper secondary education, in both general and vocational education and training, and they also target special needs education and extra-curricular and out-of-school programmes.

The **Romanian** strategy, which is currently under approval, will ensure the coordination of all policies in the area and involve more European funds for projects aimed at reducing early leaving. The strategy is also expected to create an efficient system for the collection and analysis of data and information on school attendance. In the medium term, the intention is to secure a constant reduction in the rate of students leaving early.

In Germany, Ireland, Poland, Portugal and the United Kingdom, although there is no single, comprehensive strategy to tackle the problem of early leaving from education and training as defined at European level, these countries have developed strategies and action plans to ensure that young people and adults have the opportunity to complete their education and gain the qualifications they need to succeed in the workplace.

The different initiatives that exist in **Germany** are, when considered together, wide-ranging in their effort to reduce the number of early leavers. Through the initiative 'Getting Ahead through Education' implemented in 2007, the Federal Government and the *Länder* aim to halve the share of adolescents leaving school without qualifications from a national average of 8 % to 4 % and the share of young adults without vocational qualifications but who are capable of undergoing training from 17 % to 8.5 % by the year 2015. In October 2007, the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs also adopted an action plan to reduce the number of pupils leaving school without a first general education qualification. The aim is to facilitate young people's transition from lower secondary school to the next stage – either upper secondary school or vocational education and training in the dual system. The action plan also aims to reduce the number of trainees who drop out of the system. Finally, the 'Targeted Support Strategy for Poorer-performing Pupils' of the Standing Conference, implemented in March 2010, aims to significantly reduce the number of students not achieving a minimum competence level by the end of their course of education and to halve the number of adolescents leaving school without qualifications.

DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools), the **Irish** Action Plan for Educational Inclusion was launched by the Minister for Education and Science in May 2005 and is the Department's main policy initiative to address educational disadvantage. The aim of the action plan is to ensure that the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities are prioritised and effectively addressed. Its core elements include an integrated School Support Programme (SSP) which brings together and builds upon existing interventions for schools and school clusters/communities with a concentrated level of disadvantage. All primary and post-primary schools participating in DEIS receive a range of additional resources including additional staffing, funding, access to literacy and numeracy programmes and assistance with activities such as school planning. As part of the SSP, interventions such as the Home School Community Liaison Scheme and the School Completion Programme are available to DEIS urban primary schools and to DEIS post-primary schools. There are currently 852 schools (658 primary and 194 Post Primary) participating in the DEIS School Support Programme. DEIS is the subject of on-going evaluation by the Educational Research Centre and the Department's Inspectorate who have produced a number of reports to date.

In **Poland**, two strategies adopted in 2013 are explicitly aimed at contributing to reaching the national ELET target of 4.5 % by the year 2020. The 'Strategy for the Development of Human Capital 2013-2020' aims to improve accessibility and the quality of early school education, especially in rural areas; provide additional courses to develop students' interests and talents; improve the quality of teaching and training all levels; ensure that education and training is better suited to socio-economic and labour market needs; improve the vocational education model; develop the National Qualification and Validation System; and strengthen educational and vocational counselling in schools. In addition, the strategic document 'Lifelong learning perspective' refers to actions to improve students' skills and competences, including measures to prevent early leaving. The strategy involves cooperation between many different stakeholders: central government, local government and professional bodies, employers, NGOs and education and training providers.

The **Portuguese** Government's strategy for the promotion of learning and success in school includes a comprehensive set of policy measures that explicitly refer to the reduction of early leaving as one of the expected outcomes. Additionally the Council of Ministers of 21 June 2012 approved a decree-law (No. 176/2012) that has a specific chapter entitled 'Measures to prevent school failure and early school leaving' for basic and secondary education. This chapter comprises the main policy measures targeted to at-risk students and their families. The Portuguese strategy is to increase learning opportunities and student achievement as the basis for long and successful learning careers.

Each of the four jurisdictions across the **United Kingdom** has its own strategy. In **England**, 'Building Engagement, Building Futures' (2011) sets out the strategy to maximise the participation of 16-24 year olds in education, training and work. 'Pathways to Success: Preventing Exclusion and Promoting Participation' (2012) is the **Northern Ireland** strategy designed to address comprehensively the issue of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). In **Wales**, the 'Youth Engagement and Progression Framework' (2013) brings together critical elements of NEET reduction (for those aged 11 to 25 years) together in one place with a clear two-year timetable for implementation. In the **Scottish** context, as in the rest of the United Kingdom, the term ELET is not explicitly used. However, there are strategies and policies, which concentrate mainly on getting young people aged 16+ to engage in education, training or the labour market. These are the Scottish Government's 'Opportunities for All' (2012) commitment to offer a

place in learning or training to all 16-19 year olds not already engaged in education, employment or training and Scotland's youth employment strategy 'Action for Jobs' (2012).

Finally, Norway introduced a wide-ranging project in 2010 to reduce early leaving. The project is now coming to an end, but it has involved strengthening cross-sectoral and multi-level cooperation. Some measures are still on-going and new actions are being implemented to achieve the targets.

In **Norway**, the completion of upper secondary education and training has been high on the political agenda in recent years. The three-year 'New Possibilities' project was introduced by the Ministry of Research and Education in 2010 to establish lasting collaboration between the central government, the regional county authorities and the municipalities in order to get more young people to complete upper secondary education and training. The project's aim is to raise the completion rate from 69 to 75 per cent.

In most of the countries/regions mentioned above, the strategies and initiatives to address the challenge of young people leaving education and training early without adequate qualifications have been developed since the 2011 Council Recommendation, apart from Germany (2007), Spain (2006), Ireland (2005) and the Netherlands (2002). Most countries with strategies against early leaving aim to achieve their objectives by 2020.

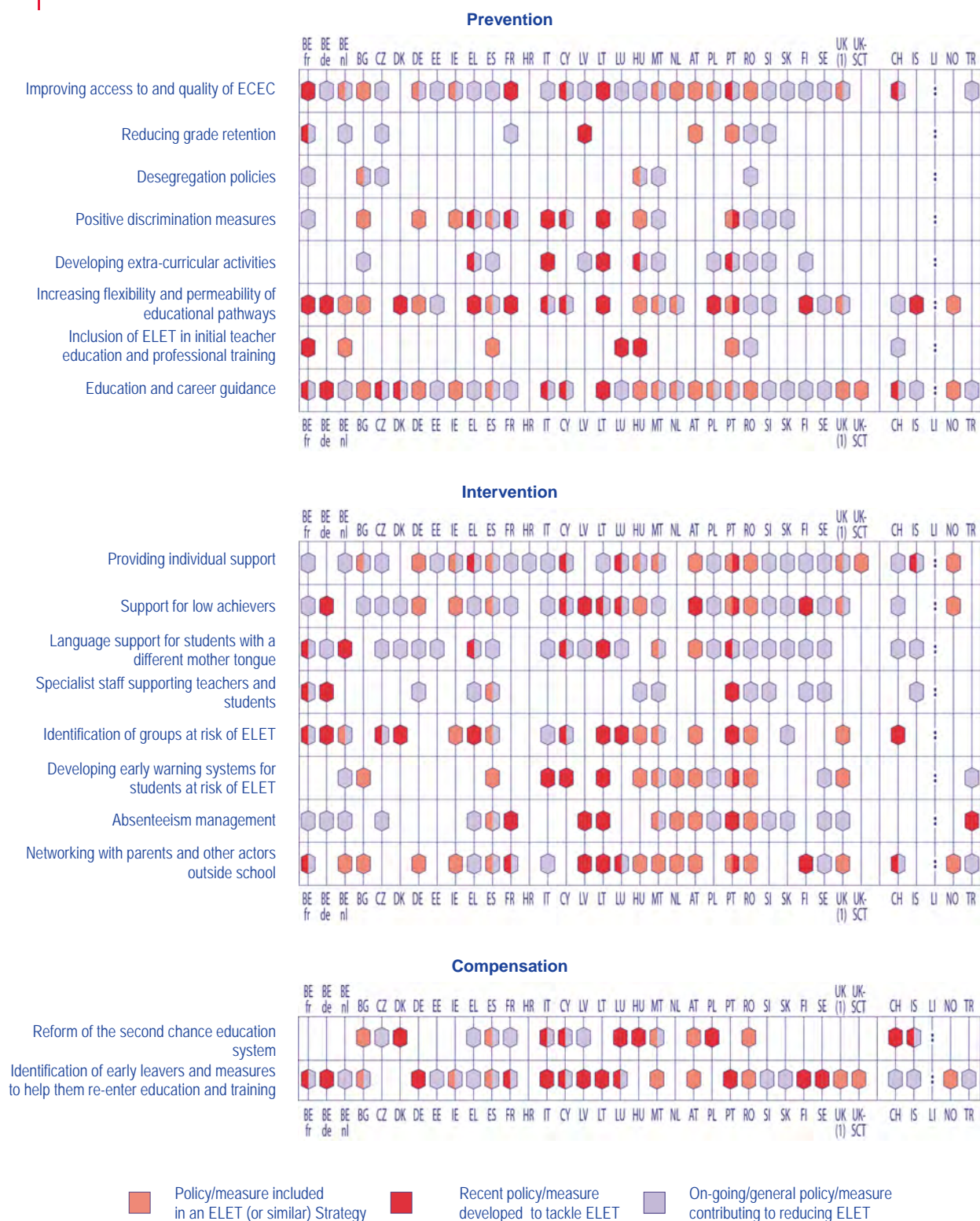
Some of the main obstacles faced by countries in developing a strategy have been to ensure collaboration between different policy sectors and stakeholders and, in particular, in encouraging schools to link with outside bodies or agencies, as e.g. in Ireland (see also Chapter 4 on governance and cross-sector cooperation). Similarly, the Austrian strategy does not cover areas such as health, housing, income or welfare and therefore should become more comprehensive in its reach across sectors. In Spain, even though there is a national framework to reduce early leaving, there are differences between the actions and policies implemented in the Autonomous Communities', as well as between the socio-economic difficulties faced, which have an impact on ELET rates. Finally, in Norway, one of the main challenges is to create sustainable structures to ensure continuity in the actions introduced.

3.2. Policies and measures for tackling early leaving

All European countries/regions have policies and measures in place that can help to reduce early leaving, even though they may not be part of a comprehensive strategy or been introduced to address this problem specifically (see the National Information Sheets for an overview of all countries' recent ELET policies and measures). Figure 3.2 categorises all national initiatives that impact on early leaving by type (prevention, intervention or compensation) and shows the policy framework and timeframe in which they sit (comprehensive/broad strategy, recent specific initiative, or general, on-going policy).

All the policies and measures listed in Figure 3.2 are presented in descending order according to the number of European countries in which they exist. It must also be mentioned that, although this Figure makes a distinction between the role of these initiatives in combating early leaving (prevention, intervention or compensation), this categorisation is not always straightforward. For example, education and career guidance can have several benefits: it may help prevent students leaving early; it may provide support for students at risk or it may guide those who have left education/training early back into the system (see also Chapter 5 on education and career guidance).

Figure 3.2: Policies and measures for tackling or contributing to reducing ELET, 2013/14



Source: Eurydice.

UK (1) = UK-ENG/WLS/NIR

Explanatory note

The figure shows the types of policies and measures for tackling ELET that have been developed in recent years (since 2009, i.e. shortly before the introduction of the EU headline target and the publication of the Council Recommendation) within or outside of a comprehensive ELET strategy. It includes policies and measures that may not have been specifically developed to tackle ELET but can, nevertheless, contribute to reducing the rate of students leaving education and training early.

Country specific notes (Figure 3.2)

United Kingdom (ENG/WLS/NIR): There are no specific regulations on grade retention; children are normally expected to progress through school within their own year group.

United Kingdom (WLS): Improving access to and the quality of ECEC is not part of the strategy to combat early leaving but rather an on-going/general policy/measure which may help to reduce it.

Prevention policies and measures

Many European countries report that their **education and career guidance** system has not been specifically developed to reduce the rate of early leavers; however, it acts as an important support measure that can contribute to the reduction of early leaving, in particular for students who are at-risk.

For example, in **Finland** and **Iceland**, guidance and counselling is directed at all students, especially those with learning difficulties, low achievers or drop-outs. In **Luxembourg**, in addition to the Local Centres for Youth Action (*Action locale pour jeunes*) offering individual guidance and support for the lowest achieving students, there is a dedicated guidance service for recently arrived immigrant students and their parents (*Cellule d'accueil scolaire pour élèves nouveaux arrivants*).

Other countries have recently revised or extended education and career guidance services (very often as part of their early leaving strategy) with a view to preventing early leaving by helping students understand their strengths, talents, study options and employment prospects (see also Chapter 5 on the role of education and career guidance in tackling ELET).

The initiatives are wide-ranging, from developing and extending existing educational and career guidance services (**ES, CY, LT**); introducing individual development and career plans (**HU, RO**); providing specific guidance and counselling for students at risk of dropping out (**AT, NO**); developing a 'Skill Guide to Career Choice Preparation and Career Guidance' (**BE de**); to improving the quality of career guidance and enhancing the skills of career guidance counsellors (**CZ**).

Most countries in Europe, moreover, have policies and measures of a structural nature, which contribute to the prevention of early leaving. These include promoting access to high quality **early childhood education and care (ECEC)** and improving teaching and learning generally in schools. In most countries, such policies are not necessarily part of an early leaving strategy, nor can they be classified as recent policies introduced specifically to address early leaving. However, they follow the general aims of the education system to raise standards in teaching and learning and improve access to quality ECEC.

Providing one or more years of free ECEC is, for example, one way in which **Malta** and **Ireland** are trying to increase participation and facilitate access. **Spain** has increased the supply of ECEC places. In **Germany**, the legal right to ECEC has been extended recently to all one-year-olds. And in **Hungary**, participating in ECEC will be compulsory for three- to five-year-olds from September 2015. Other countries, have introduced measures to support vulnerable children, such as preparatory classes for socially disadvantaged children (**CZ**) and pre-school education plans (**FI**).

Reforms have been introduced in several countries to improve teaching and learning in the compulsory stages of education. For example, in **Cyprus**, a new curriculum has been implemented for pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education that will focus on the development of new skills and key competences. **Portugal** has made curriculum revisions to increase teaching and learning and autonomy in school management. Schools will now have the opportunity to manage and adapt the curriculum locally, making it more relevant to learners and to the mission of the school. In **Belgium (German-speaking Community)**, reforms focus in particular on secondary education, which seek to ensure that every student is encouraged to reach their potential according to their own level of development, their skills and goals.

Among the recent ECEC policies and measures specifically introduced with a view to reducing the proportion of young people leaving education and training early are:

An increase in the overall ECEC budget (**BE fr**); the enrolment of children from the age of two in pre-primary schools with priority given to children from socially disadvantaged areas (**FR**); guaranteed access to early childhood educational care for children from families at risk of social exclusion (**LT**); a new national curriculum for pre-school education and a duty on communes to provide pre-school places (**PL**); a national external assessment of the quality of ECEC as a basis for creating pedagogical guidelines for the under-threes and to revise the existing curricula guidelines for the three- to six-year-olds (**PT**).

In more than half of European countries, other recent policies and measures for reducing early leaving, in many cases as part of their early leaving strategy, aim to **increase the flexibility and permeability of educational pathways**. Having to make premature choices between educational pathways at an early age can demotivate those who have not been guided well. Educational pathways which are too rigid can, moreover, create obstacles to completing upper secondary education (European Commission, 2013; see also Section 2.2 on the transition to upper secondary education). In other cases, increasing the flexibility and permeability of educational pathways has been the means to ensure a smooth transition between education levels or different types of education, thus helping minimise the risk of early leaving.

For example, countries/regions such as **Belgium (French and Flemish Community)**, **Cyprus**, **Poland** and **Finland** have undertaken reforms to improve the quality, attractiveness and flexibility of their VET systems. This includes changes to the qualification systems aimed at improving the recognition and validation of skills. Related to this, in **Italy**, a legislative decree was recently issued that encourages the full integration and recognition of non-formal and informal learning experiences within the education system, which will, in future, be included in a student's 'personal portfolio'.

In **Belgium (German-speaking Community)**, **Germany**, **Lithuania** and **Portugal**, projects have been recently implemented that seek to reduce ELET by improving the transition between general education and different types of vocational pathways or between different types of vocational programmes (**NL**) (for more information on measures to tackle ELET in VET see Chapter 6).

A project in **Iceland** aims to ensure the smooth transition of students from compulsory to upper secondary education.

Positive discrimination measures to reduce ELET rates have been implemented in recent years; in six countries these have been introduced within the framework of early leaving strategies. These measures all provide increased resources and support for schools and regions suffering from socio-economic problems, low educational achievement and attendance as well as high ELET rates.

In **Greece** and **Cyprus**, this occurs in the so-called 'Educational Priority Zones'. Similarly, in **Portugal**, under the 'Priority Intervention Education Territories' programme, special actions are targeted at students at risk of dropping out of school and those who have left already. In **Lithuania**, the aim of the 'Universal Multifunction Centres' is to provide improved educational and social services in rural areas.

In several other countries, positive discrimination measures are part of on-going education policies, which can contribute to reducing the number of early leavers from education and training.

In **France**, for example, the 'Priority Education Policy' (*Éducation prioritaire*) aims to correct the impact of social and economic inequalities in educational achievement by strengthening teaching and educational activities in schools and institutions that face the greatest social challenges.

In **Slovenia**, members of the Roma community are defined as a special group whose rights are regulated by legal provisions. These rights stipulate additional measures for an increase in the attainment level of Roma students and for their successful integration into the education system.

Fewer European countries have policies and measures for enriching the learning experience through the provision of **extra-curricular activities**. These measures are also reported to impact positively on reducing the number of students leaving education and training early.

For example, in **Hungary**, school days last until 4 o'clock, with various extra-curricular activities provided after lessons. In **Poland**, each school is obliged to formulate a plan of extra-curricular classes intended to help students develop their knowledge, abilities, interests, talents and independence.

In **Lithuania** and **Portugal**, recent initiatives to combat early leaving allow schools to put in place activities and programmes to meet students' current needs, such as cultural, artistic, environmental and health education programmes, intercultural education or remedial teaching.

Improving teachers' understanding of the underlying reasons for early leaving, its triggers, early warning signs as well as the teachers' role in preventing it should be a focus of **initial and continuing**

teacher education (European Commission, 2013). Six countries/regions have recently developed measures, sometimes as part of their early leaving strategy, in this area.

For example, in **Belgium (French and Flemish Community)** and **Luxembourg** the issue of school dropout and early leaving are now included in initial teacher training and/or continuing professional development programmes. Additionally, in **Spain**, giving teachers some training in education and career guidance is gaining importance as a measure to prevent early leaving.

By contrast, very few European countries have recently implemented policies or measures to **restrict the practice of grade retention**. In most of them, reforms of this nature have been introduced as part of general policy rather than as a specific measure to prevent early leaving.

A pilot project was recently launched, for example, in **Belgium (French Community)** whereby schools participating on a voluntary basis are helped to find alternative practices to grade retention. In **Latvia** and **Portugal**, recently introduced legislation stipulates mandatory support measures for students with learning difficulties, as well as opportunities for students to repeat exams so that they repeat a year only in certain circumstances.

Desegregation policies, which aim at widening the social composition of schools and raising educational attainment in socially segregated schools, have been recently developed in the context of an early leaving strategy in only two European countries, and in four others there are general, on-going initiatives in this area.

In **Hungary**, regulations allow for school catchment areas to be defined taking into consideration the social status of families living in the area.

An example of an on-going policy in this area can be found in **Romania**, where a ministerial order has been in place since 2007 to prevent Roma children from being segregated into particular schools. The National Council for Combating Discrimination monitors the situation.

Intervention policies and measures

Intervention policies are designed to identify students who are experiencing difficulties at an early stage so that they do not become disengaged with learning and ultimately leave education and training early. Most of the countries that have implemented intervention measures as part of their early leaving strategy focus on **providing individual support to students**, particularly to those with learning difficulties (see also Section 3.3 on targeted policies and measures for groups at risk of early leaving). Examples of different types of policies and measures developed in this area are:

The early identification of learning difficulties and the provision of targeted support occurs, for example, in **DE, CY, AT, IS** and **NO**. Special classes and/or extra teaching staff for students needing additional learning support is made available in **LU** and **PT**.

In other countries where additional support is not only a recent but also an on-going measure, such as in **Malta, Poland** and **Slovenia**, the focus is on meeting the students' individual developmental and educational needs. In **Slovenia**, this includes students receiving hospital treatment as well as gifted students.

In the **French Community of Belgium**, individual learning plans (*PIA-Plan individuel d'apprentissage*) help to establish a coherent approach to supporting students between the different stakeholders involved. These plans must be used by schools in cases where students attend an additional school year with special classes to enable them to catch up with learning and acquire the necessary competences. In **Denmark**, all schools provide support for low achievers through specialist staff. Similarly in **Spain**, students receive educational support inside or outside the regular classroom from members of the teaching staff, always within regular school hours. The aim is to boost learning and school performance, thereby improving students' social integration.

Eleven countries (**IE, EL, ES, LT, LU, HU, MT, SI, FI, IS, CH**) report moreover having on-going policies and measures in place to ensure the integration of students with special educational needs and thus contributing to reducing early leaving.

Finally, in eight countries, student support measures are focused on the provision of financial help. Students are financially assisted, for example, through the provision of free textbooks, free school transport and/or scholarships (**BG, EL, ES, HR, MT, RO**), free school meals (**IE, SI**), or financial incentives for students or their families if they continue to attend school (**ES, MT**).

Providing **language support for students** with a mother tongue other than the language of instruction is part of the mainly on-going, general efforts in many European countries. In most of them, the focus is more on providing support in learning the language of instruction and less on providing lessons in the migrant students' mother tongue (as in Denmark, Luxembourg, Slovenia, Sweden and Switzerland).

In **Denmark, Sweden, Slovenia** and **Switzerland**, students can attend classes in their mother tongue in addition to remedial lessons in the language of instruction. In **Luxembourg**, this type of provision exists in certain primary schools for pupils with Portuguese as their mother tongue. The aim of these classes is to preserve and develop language skills in the mother tongue so as to provide the students with a better foundation for learning other languages.

In **14 German Länder**, on the other hand, all students who enter primary and secondary education are being assessed in the language of instruction. Based on the results of this assessment, language programmes adapted to students' specific needs are developed.

Several more countries/regions have introduced new policies or measures to increase language support as a means of reducing ELET rates, and in **Malta** and **Austria** this is part of the specific ELET strategy. In countries such as **Belgium (French Community)**, **Greece** and **Cyprus**, this means that newly arrived students could spend a longer time in reception classes.

Parental involvement can encourage and motivate young people in their learning by giving them high educational aspirations. Moreover, raising parental awareness can help identify learning difficulties and early signs of disengagement to allow for timely intervention (European Commission, 2013). A relatively large number of European countries/regions have recently implemented policies and measures for tackling early leaving by focusing on **cooperation with parents and other partners outside school**. In all cases, the aim is to inform parents if a student is absent from school and to set up cross-sector support mechanisms, involving social and health services, to ensure that individual learning needs are met and general wellbeing is supported (see also Section 4.3 on multi-agency partnerships).

In slightly more than half of the European countries, intervention policies and measures focus on **identifying groups at risk of leaving education and training early**.

Examples of recent policies and measures in this area can be found, for example, in **Denmark, Lithuania** and **Hungary** where school attendance databases have been or will be put in place to identify those at risk of early leaving. In **Belgium (French Community)** and **Greece**, this kind of data is collected and/or analysed via newly established observatories for the prevention of school violence and dropout. In **Cyprus** and in some schools in **Luxembourg**, students at risk of early leaving are identified through a variety of measures including skills assessment, mentoring or other support services.

Some countries/regions report having put intervention policies and measures in place to combat violence in school which can also serve to identify and help at-risk students.

In **Belgium (French Community)**, for example, the service of 'mobile teams' contributes to preventing violence and school dropout in primary schools. In secondary schools, a 'mediation service' can intervene on request in order to help prevent violence and school dropout. A free phone number is also available for parents whose children have been facing violence, conflicts, bullying or discrimination in school. In **Spain**, too, a particular emphasis is put on addressing school violence, improving safety, fighting substance abuse and generally creating a good learning environment that can contribute to reducing early leaving.

More than half of the European countries have also developed or improved measures to **monitor absenteeism** and pick up the **early warning signs that students may be at risk of leaving early**.

In **Latvia**, the attendance system for students of compulsory school age has been improved in recent years. The new system enables local authorities to follow up on all students enrolled in their schools. In **Lithuania**, an electronic school diary has been introduced for general education and vocational training schools. It allows parents to see information on their children's recent achievements and progress, directly communicate with teachers and participate in forums on various issues. Some electronic diaries allow schools to send an SMS or e-mail to inform parents if their child is missing school or being late. Likewise, in **Malta**, the students' database in each school automatically sends an SMS to parents if their child's absence is unauthorised.

Lithuania is also among the countries that have developed early warning systems to identify and respond to early signs of ELET. Students who, over one month miss more than half of the lessons prescribed by the compulsory curriculum are registered in the 'National Information System on Children's Absenteeism and Pupils' Truancy'. This data is subsequently transmitted to the information systems of other agencies like social welfare, internal affairs or health care. In the **Netherlands**, since 2009, schools register absentees via the Digital Absence Portal. The purpose is to use a simplified, computerised reporting procedure so as to focus time and effort on engaging with truants and guiding them back to school.

In **Turkey**, a project was instigated by the Ministry of National Education's Head Office for Basic Education in October 2013 called 'Increasing Attendance at Primary School'. The aim is to increase the rate of school attendance in the first eight years of compulsory education and to reduce absenteeism through: a detailed situation analysis leading to policy proposals and measures to prevent early school leaving; a revision of the legislation providing the legal basis for measures to tackle the problems identified as risk factors; addressing the problem of absenteeism among different the groups at risk; and raising awareness among all Ministry staff and responsible authorities about preventing absenteeism.

Several countries/regions also report monitoring absenteeism and having early warning systems in place, not specifically to address the problem of early leaving, but which can, nevertheless, contribute to reducing the rates of early leavers.

This refers, for example, in **Malta** to assessments that help identifying and addressing students' problems in Maltese and English at an early stage.

In some other countries, the early warning system is put into effect through an obligation to manage absenteeism placed on schools (**BE de, BE fr**) or teachers (**EL, PL, SI**), for example by recording absences electronically.

Specialist staff can be of crucial importance in creating a learning environment that meets the needs of individual students (European Commission, 2013). While this is a general policy in a number of countries, four countries/regions have recently implemented intervention policies to ensure the involvement of specialists in efforts to reduce early leaving.

For example, in **Portugal**, specialist staff are being deployed to support at-risk students through tutoring or mentoring, psychological support and education and career counselling. In **Belgium (German-speaking Community)**, specialist advisory groups have been established in recent years to improve school and teaching quality. A new decree on the creation of school development consultants is intended to ensure that practical advice is given on how to improve conditions for learning and teaching.

Several more countries traditionally make use of specialist staff to support students in various aspects of their education, health, personal and social life.

In **Slovenia**, for example, school or kindergarten counselling specialists support students, teachers and parents. They help solve children's complex educational, psychological and social difficulties. In **Finland**, student welfare officers help students with problems relating to development or difficulties at school. Typical situations requiring a student welfare officer's attention include truancy, bullying and problems caused by changing schools or classes. School psychologists deal with learning and adjustment problems at school. In **Sweden**, too, specialist support staff are responsible for ensuring the health of young children and students in pre-school classes, compulsory schools and upper secondary schools. This includes medical, psychological, psychosocial support as well as support for special needs.

Compensation policies and measures

The majority of European countries/regions have initiatives to **identify people who have left education and training early and help them re-enter the system**. In most cases, these initiatives have been introduced fairly recently or are part of early leaving strategies. For the most part, they are special programmes or schools that allow early leavers or at-risk students to complete their basic education and acquire key competences.

Examples of such initiatives are the 'Time-out' project in **Belgium (German-speaking Community)**, the 'New Opportunities' programme in **Spain**, the project 'Alternative Education in the Education System' in **Lithuania**, the 'Fit for Training' pilot project in **Austria**, the 'Integrated Programme for Education and Training' in **Portugal**, the programme 'Project Learning for Young Adults' in **Slovenia** and the 'Fold High School Initiative' in **Sweden**.

Moreover, some countries/regions offer alternative pathways for students who have left school without qualifications.

In **Bulgaria**, this includes learning during the day or evening. In **Belgium (French Community)**, **Spain** and **Iceland**, distance education offers an opportunity for students who are unable to attend mainstream education or who live in rural areas to learn individually or in groups with the help of interactive communication tools.

In the **United Kingdom (England)**, vocational 16-19 programmes of study offer basic education and substantive workplace experience for those young people who have not obtained General Certificates of Secondary Education. In the **United Kingdom (Scotland)**, the 'Opportunities for all' commitment aims to offer a place in learning or training to all 16-19 year olds not already engaged in education, employment or training.

Finally, more than a dozen countries/regions have recently **made reforms to second chance education** to introduce or improve compensatory provision. These reforms form part of the early leaving strategy in around half of these countries.

In **Denmark**, **Cyprus**, **Poland** and **Switzerland**, for example, a wide range of measures have been taken to improve the quality and attractiveness of vocational education and training programmes, especially for those who have left the education system prematurely (for more information on measures to tackle early leaving in VET see Chapter 6).

In **Malta** and **Romania**, efforts are being made to provide quality second chance education for targeted groups, i.e. persons with a disability (**MT**) and young people living in rural areas and areas with a large Roma population (**RO**).

In **Italy**, a recently issued regulation reorganised the adult education system. Former centres and evening classes will merge into the new Centres for Adult Education (CPIA) offering personalised learning paths to improve adults' competences and skills. The new Centres will also offer opportunities for young people to obtain their lower and upper secondary qualification or get a certificate of attendance from the first two years of upper secondary school (i.e. the certificate of completion of compulsory education). These Centres also provide literacy courses and Italian language courses for adults learning Italian as a second or additional language.

Luxembourg's first second chance school (*École de la deuxième chance*, E2C) was set up in recent years. It is open to early leavers from education and training aged 16-24 and provides both general and vocational training, extra-curricular activities and comprehensive socio-pedagogic support. The **Icelandic** project 'Education Can Work' is a measure to tackle early leaving by providing students without a qualification the opportunity to graduate from vocational or upper secondary education.

Several other countries/regions highlight compensation policies and measures related to second chance education that have not been specifically developed to tackle early leaving, but which can contribute to reducing it. These include:

reforms to vocational education (**CY**); the establishment and/or expansion of second chance schools (**EL**, **FR**, **ES**) or the introduction of legal frameworks such as the 'Adult Education Act' in **Iceland** for courses that are officially recognised as leading to upper secondary school level or to tertiary education.

3.3. Targeted policies and measures for groups at high risk of early leaving

A multitude of national and international research indicates that certain student groups are more at risk of leaving early than others (see Section 2.1 on ELET factors related to the individual and family background). The findings show that early leavers are frequently young people from a socio-economically disadvantaged, migrant or Roma background, or those with special educational needs. The Council recommendation on early school leaving⁽²⁾ specifically mentions these as key target groups for comprehensive policy interventions.

In fact, everywhere in Europe, policies and measures target the higher risk groups (see Figure 3.3). These policies may be embedded in an early leaving strategy, where one exists, in other specific policies and measures to address early leaving, or in the general on-going policies which contribute to

⁽²⁾ Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving, OJ C 191, 1.7.2011.

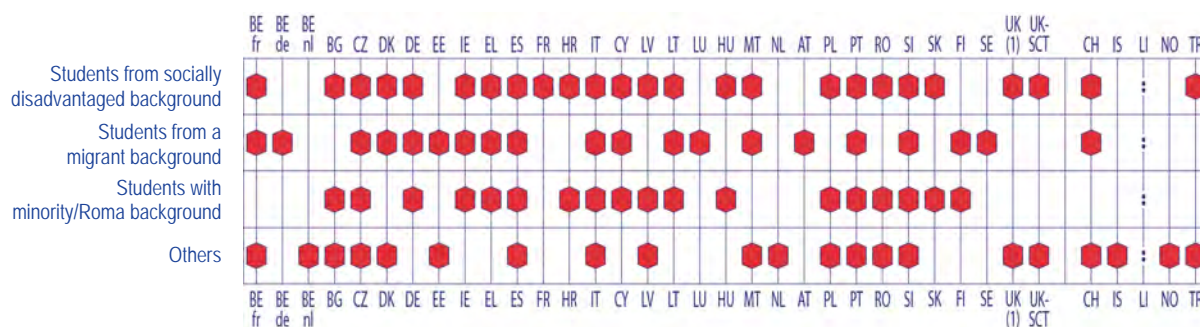
the reduction of early leaving (see previous Section 3.2). Therefore, the targeted policies and measures presented here sometimes overlap with those mentioned in the previous sections. The aim of this section, however, is to highlight the specific groups at risk of early leaving that are at the focus of these initiatives. The order in which they are presented below reflects the number of European countries focussing on each target group (from the highest to the lowest).

In most cases, targeted policies and measures to combat early leaving focus specifically on **students from disadvantaged backgrounds**.

Some of these initiatives target all disadvantaged students, for example, in the case of preparatory classes for socially disadvantaged children during the year prior to the start of compulsory education (**CZ**); while others are geographically focussed, as in the case of Educational Priority Zones (**CY, EL**) or the Priority Intervention Education Territories (**PT**). One country focuses its efforts to support disadvantaged students on desegregating schools (**HU**).

Another example of an initiative to reduce early leaving by targeting students from disadvantaged backgrounds is the **Spanish** ‘Reinforcement and Support Programme in Secondary Education’. It is aimed at secondary schools with a significant proportion of students who are educationally disadvantaged because of their socio-cultural environment. The programme aims to improve school management and education outcomes, working simultaneously with students, families and the local community. Schools draw up an action plan in line with their specific needs, and the education authorities provide the funding for the implementation of the project.

Figure 3.3: Targeting groups at a high risk of leaving education and training early, 2013/14



Source: Eurydice.

UK (1) = UK-ENG/WLS/NIR

Explanatory note

This figure shows the groups that are considered to be at a high risk of leaving education and training early, and have therefore been the focus of policies and measures specifically developed to address their needs. ‘Others’ refers in most cases to students with special educational needs.

In some countries, such as Germany, Ireland, France, Malta, Slovenia and Poland, policies and measures to support students from disadvantaged backgrounds who are at risk of leaving education and training early seek to provide additional support on the basis of individual educational needs. This can be through additional teaching, increased guidance or better collaboration with parents.

Related to this, some other countries, including Italy and Latvia, have targeted policies focused on strengthening teachers’ competences to provide a person-centred and need-centred learning path for disadvantaged students.

Targeted support for disadvantaged groups at higher risk of early leaving also comes in the form of financial assistance, in particular for textbooks, schools meals and transportation (e.g. in BG, HR, PL, RO and SI).

In order to support young people from socially disadvantaged background and reduce their risk of early leaving in **Poland**, financial support is available through a school allowance. This is provided on an ad hoc basis that may be granted to students in temporary difficulty (e.g. death of a parent, fire, etc.). The allowance may take the form of money to cover expenses related to education or materials.

Finally, in Lithuania special centres exist to provide very intensive support for disadvantaged students who are at risk of early leaving.

The youth schools in **Lithuania** are for students aged 12-16 who lack both the motivation to learn and social skills, and who are experiencing learning difficulties. They are engaged in practical activities linked to the basic education curriculum while at the same time receiving social rehabilitation. Youth homes are for pupils aged 12-17 who have completed a course of treatment for and rehabilitation from dependence on psychotropic substances and alcohol, as well as those who have behaviour-related and emotional development disorders and need to improve their mental well-being and motivation for learning linked to the basic education curriculum.

Twenty-one countries/regions have policies and measures focusing on **other groups at risk of leaving school early**. This largely concerns students with special educational needs. The aim is mainly to promote inclusive education, i.e. a supportive environment and equal access to education, additional support teachers and extra guidance and support during the transition from school to work.

In several countries/regions, the policies and measures for reducing ELET rates are not directed only at students with special educational needs but also other at-risk groups, such as:

students in the first year after transferring to a secondary vocational school (**NL**); the 10 % lowest achieving students in the final grade of lower secondary education (**NO**); pregnant teenagers/young parents and young people in correctional facilities (**MT**); students with behaviour problems, emotional disorders, lack of motivation or difficulties in adjusting to the education system (**ES**); other students identified as being at risk of disengaging, e.g. children and young people looked after by local authorities, those with health problems, young carers, young people with behavioural issues, substance abusers, care leavers or young people who are homeless (**UK-ENG, UK-NIR** and **UK-SCT**).

In half of the countries/regions, policies and measures are in place to reduce early leaving among **young people from a migrant background**. The initiatives here are mainly focused on providing language support to these students. Moreover, some countries report having various programmes and projects for the education, training and integration of different groups of migrant students.

In **Greece**, for example, since 2010, in collaboration with some universities, the Ministry of Education has implemented a number of projects such as 'Training of Immigrants and Repatriated Students' and 'Education of Children of the Muslim Minority in Thrace'. The general aim of these projects is to combat school failure and drop-out in order to ensure equitable education and social integration of all students.

Finally, in a bit less than half of the countries/regions, policies and measures are targeting **young people with minority background** with the objective to reduce their ELET rates. In most cases, this concerns Roma students; while in Ireland, there is a 'Traveller Education Strategy', which promotes the phasing out of segregated traveller education provision and the provision of additional educational resources allocated on the basis of individual educational need rather than that of ethnic or cultural background.

In other countries, there are targeted policies and measures for reducing early leaving specifically among Roma students. These initiatives include measures to identify Roma children and facilitate their registration and attendance at school as well as providing additional assistance for Roma students.

In **Poland**, for example, a government programme for the Roma (*Program na rzecz społeczności romskiej w Polsce*) running since 2004 was extended and will now be continued from 2014-2020. Its main objective was to improve the education of the Roma population by: supporting the employment of Roma assistants and assistant teachers; providing financial assistance for Roma students (for textbooks, transport to/from school, school meals, and extra-curricular classes); providing remedial classes and special classes on the Roma culture and tradition; designing textbooks and curricula on the Roma language, history and culture; etc.

Other forms of assistance for Roma people include additional education counsellors (made available from 2014 in Schleswig-Holstein, **DE**), special places for Roma students in secondary schools (**RO**) or smaller class sizes where at least three Roma students are in the class (**SI**).

Some targeted policies and measures for Roma students also focus on awareness-raising.

In **Spain**, the *Fundación Secretariado Gitano* is implementing a programme called 'When I grow up I would like to be'. It aims to raise awareness of the value of education among Roma students and families and involves public authorities in the fight against inequality in education. For the campaign, a photo-van travelled across Spain taking pictures of the 'dreams' of Roma girls and boys (e.g. being a doctor or a teacher) and their parents. The message of the campaign was that 'whatever your dream might be, finish secondary education' and 'Roma with Education is Roma with a future'. 1 100 families participated in the photo-van campaign in 2010, with 1 083 photos taken in 14 different cities.

In **Lithuania**, the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania approved the 'Action Plan on Roma Integration into Lithuanian Society 2012-2014'. Its purpose is to promote the participation of Roma in society, to reduce social exclusion, to raise Roma community awareness and to make society more tolerant of Roma people and their culture.

CHAPTER 4: GOVERNANCE AND CROSS-SECTOR COOPERATION IN THE AREA OF EARLY LEAVING

This chapter looks at the issue of governance and cross-sector cooperation in tackling the problem of students leaving education and training early (ELET).

Reducing early leaving requires a long-term policy approach with sustained political and financial commitment from all key stakeholders. Strong governance arrangements are needed to manage the relationships across the relevant policy areas and agencies ('horizontal cooperation') as well as between the various levels of government – national, regional, local and school level ('vertical cooperation') (European Commission, 2013a). The ability to work with private and non-governmental bodies such as employers and trade unions (cross-sector cooperation) is also essential.

The first section looks at cross-government cooperation between the various ministries/departments or between the different policy areas operating within the same ministry. The focus is on identifying the other policy areas that cooperate with the education sector at the central/top level of government on initiatives to address early leaving in European countries.

The second section looks at the bodies set up to coordinate initiatives to combat early leaving. Although specific bodies exist in only a few countries, elsewhere, cooperation mechanisms are being developed or strengthened.

At local and school level in particular, cooperation requires the development of multi-agency partnerships involving different professions and stakeholders such as school staff, psychologists, social workers and guidance specialists. The third section shows that in most countries, this kind of multi-agency working is fairly recent and still needs to be strengthened.

If cooperation is to be extended, it must be shown to be effective, therefore section four takes a closer look at the mechanisms to monitor cooperation between stakeholders and examines the preliminary evaluation results from the countries where such monitoring has been put in place.

Finally, the last section looks at cross-sector cooperation in relation to the development of youth guarantees and similar schemes. They contain some important elements of the compensation measures introduced to address the problem of early leaving. Being at the interface of education and employment, effective cooperation in this area is key to success.

4.1. Cross-government cooperation in tackling ELET

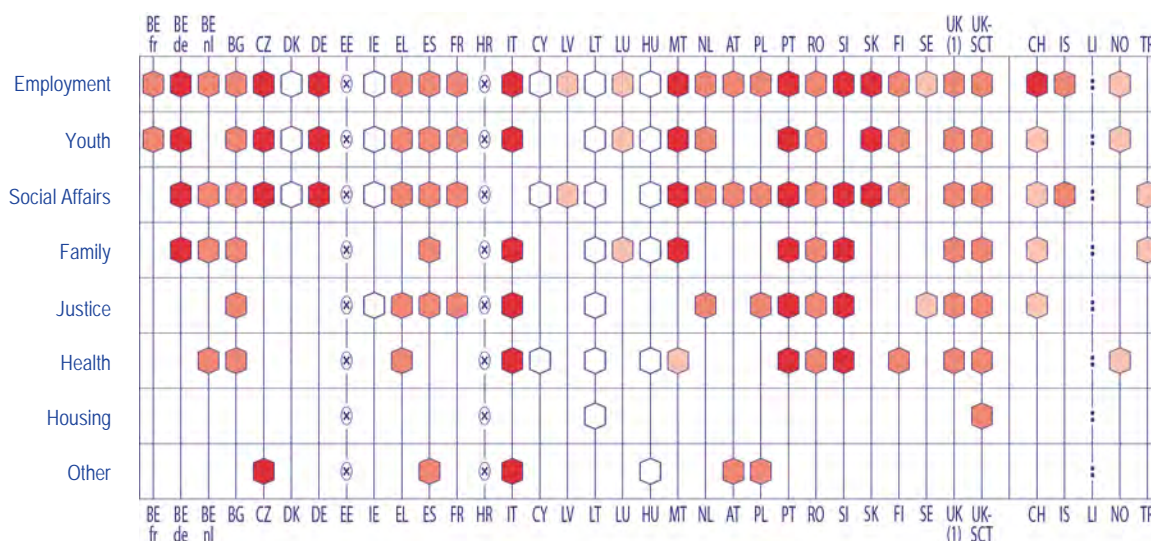
Enhanced cooperation at all levels is a fundamental condition for effective national strategies, policies and measures to combat early leaving. As the 2011 Council recommendation ⁽¹⁾ indicates, comprehensive strategies on early school leaving must comprise a mix of prevention, intervention and compensation initiatives, which need to straddle different policy sectors. These measures should be integrated into all relevant policies aimed at children and young people; therefore cross-government cooperation is essential.

In Belgium (Flemish Community), Bulgaria, Spain, Malta, the Netherlands and Austria where a comprehensive strategy to tackle early leaving has been developed, the need to strengthen cooperation is among the main objectives. Similarly, in all other countries that do not have a specific strategy in place but do tackle early leaving from education and training through specific policies and measures, cross-sector cooperation is one of the stated elements for ensuring a coordinated approach that successfully addresses the multi-dimensional factors leading to it. The question is therefore in what way these political declarations have been implemented in practice in the European countries.

⁽¹⁾ Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving, OJ C 191, 1.7.2011.

At the central/top-level, the policy area working with education on policies to reduce early leaving in almost all countries is employment (see Figure 4.1). Given that its remit has a direct impact on skills and qualifications, and therefore on entry to the labour market, the policies it pursues with respect to young people also directly impact on early leavers. Of course, this is a two-way process, so the rate of young people leaving education or training early, without adequate qualifications, in turn, affects policy development. As a result, the ministry/department responsible for employment cooperates closely with the ministry/department responsible for education in nearly all countries. The main aim here is to ensure a smooth transition from school to work, but compensation measures that help young people re-enter the system to improve their qualifications are also important.

Figure 4.1: Cross-government cooperation on ELET: policy areas working with education at central/top-level, 2013/14



- There is a tradition of cross-government cooperation at central/top-level
- Cooperation mechanisms are being tested within projects
- Cooperation mechanisms exist/are being developed
- Other policy areas are involved but cooperation mechanisms are not yet established
- ⊗ No comprehensive strategy/ no specific ELET policies/measures

Source: Eurydice.

UK (1) = UK-ENG/WLS/NIR

Country-specific notes

The other policy areas involved with education are:

- CZ:** Sports and the Interior (the latter is related to the education of migrant students)
- ES:** Women and Immigration (in some Autonomous Communities) and Public Safety (in some Communities, police officers are involved in preventing absenteeism)
- IT:** The State/Regions conference
- HU:** Public administration and Home Affairs
- AT:** The Ministry of Science, Research and Economy
- PL:** The Ministry of Regional Development

Belgium (BE fr): Regarding education and training related issues, the French Community of Belgium cooperates with the Walloon Region as well as with the Brussels-Capital Region.

Spain: Although at ministry level only employment and social affairs are involved, at Autonomous Community level (top level), bodies such as the departments of justice, youth and family may also cooperate; practices vary depending on the measures and agreements in place in each Autonomous Community.

Social affairs sector is the second most active partner. Its role is linked to the mitigation of the social disadvantages associated with early leaving from education and training, such as low family income, living in a deprived area, etc. The third most important partner is youth, which contributes, for example, by offering young people non-formal learning opportunities. Other significant partners in order of importance are family, justice and health.

The policy areas working together vary between countries due to the different political and institutional structures as well as the traditional links and methods of cooperation. In some countries, for example, education and youth form part of the same ministry, while in others, education and employment are combined.

In more than half of the countries, a broad range of policy areas (at least four in addition to education) are involved. Although this is the case in Denmark, Ireland, Cyprus, Lithuania and Hungary, specific cooperation mechanisms between the different policy areas have not yet been established (see National Information Sheets for a complete overview of policy area cooperation).

Where combating early leaving is high on the political agenda, it might be expected that the drive towards increased collaboration would create a new cooperation landscape, bringing about important changes not only within policy areas, but also changing the relationships between them. However, the necessary process of creating a shared understanding of the issues, getting to know each other's culture and motivational forces and establishing common working methods is very recent in most countries and remains a challenge for all.

Where there is already a tradition of cooperation between areas, it is much easier to cooperate on initiatives to address the problem of early leaving and to institutionalise new arrangements:

In **Germany**, for example, the dual system in vocational education and training is well established and employers are used to working closely with education and training authorities. Individual support plans for poorer-performing students are implemented in cooperation with the (vocational) guidance element of the youth welfare service at local level. The Federal Employment Agency supports schools in the development of careers services and offers to participate in the coordination of regional stakeholders in order to improve transition management.

In **Portugal**, the national Commission for the Protection of Children and Youth, although not originally tasked with coordinating ELET issues, has now taken charge. In this, it benefits from its long-established cooperation with policy areas at the central/top level. It draws its members from the Ministries of Solidarity, Employment and Social Security (including Family); Education and Science; Justice; Youth Sports and Health.

Several countries ⁽²⁾ have already established or are currently developing cooperation mechanisms as part of their current strategic actions to combat early leaving. In some of them, this has taken the form of an early leaving coordinating body (see Section 4.2 on coordinating bodies to tackle ELET).

In some other countries, new or strengthened forms of cooperation are being tested within project-based measures for tackling early leaving.

In **Latvia**, for example, the operational programme 'Human Resources and Employment'; in **Luxembourg**, the project called 'Youth' and the 'Voluntary Guidance Service' (*Service Volontaire d'Orientation – SVO*); in **Sweden**, the projects *Unga In* ⁽³⁾ and *Plug In* ⁽⁴⁾, initiatives supported by the European Social Fund; in **Norway**, the project 'New Possibilities' – a partnership arrangement between county education officers, the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities, the Ministry of Education and Research, the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion; and in **Turkey**, a programme providing financial support to students who continue their education with a 'conditional cash transfer'.

These countries have the potential for initiating a learning process for cross-government cooperation on early leaving. However, the challenge remains to create a sustainable structure for this cooperation before the projects end or as a follow-up.

⁽²⁾ Belgium (French and Flemish Community), Bulgaria, Greece, Spain, France, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Romania, Finland, the United Kingdom (all four jurisdictions) and Iceland

⁽³⁾ <http://www.arbetsformedlingen.se/ungain>

⁽⁴⁾ <http://www.skl.se/skolakulturfritud/skolaforskola/sklssatsningarutvecklingskolan/pluginfarregymnasieavhopp.2132.html>

Most other countries have not developed formal cooperation mechanisms for early leaving and different policy areas approach it from their own angle. Therefore, the current extent of cooperation seems to be confined to the existing forms of cross-government cooperation that may not necessarily be specific to early leaving.

Finally, arrangements for vertical cooperation exist in a number of countries; they are essential to bridge the gap between the national or central policy-making level and the regional and local policy-implementation level.

In **Malta**, for example, effective implementation of the ELET strategy requires vertical co-operation between the national level and college or school level. Moreover, the active participation of college and school leaders as well as teachers is essential. Parents' active participation in school life is also being actively promoted as a critical success factor.

In the **Netherlands**, regional account managers are operating as part of the Ministry for Education to help and intervene in cross-government cooperation. Moreover, agreements have been made between municipalities represented by regions; general secondary and vocational secondary schools and the national government (see also Section 4.2).

In **Switzerland**, through the political platform *Tripartite Agglomerationskonferenz* (TAK), the Confederation, the cantons and communities aim to reduce institutional barriers between levels of government. The TAK has published several recommendations for the education area, some of them also relevant for tackling ELET.

4.2. Coordinating bodies to tackle ELET

A coordinating body can support cooperation on tackling early leaving from education and training at national level between Ministries and other relevant institutions, and facilitate coordination among all stakeholders. It can also raise awareness of the problems surrounding early leaving and ensure long-term political commitment (European Commission, 2013a).

Across Europe, the Ministry of Education is generally in charge of coordinating the work of other policy areas and stakeholders on matters relating to early leaving. However, this coordinating role is more developed in some countries than others.

Specific coordinating bodies have been established in four countries where an early leaving strategy has been adopted – in Belgium (Flemish Community), Spain, Malta and the Netherlands (see Figure 4.2).

In **Belgium (Flemish Community)**, a thematic working group was established for the development of the action plan, in which many stakeholders such as policy-makers, social partners, educational umbrella organisations, labour market organisations, etc. were involved. Moreover, a cross-sector steering group meets at least once a year to implement the 'Action Plan on Early School Leaving'.

Stakeholders involved in the **Spanish** ELET strategy are part of the 'Sectoral Committee for Education', where the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, as well as the education administrations of the Autonomous Communities (both top-level authorities) are represented. Other stakeholders include other administrations as well as employers, unions and local corporations. In addition, the Spanish 'ET 2020' working group has monitored and revised the actions implemented in the whole education system to reduce ELET. As a result, the working group has prepared a report, adopted by the 'Sectoral Committee for Education'.

The strategic plan in **Malta** recommends that whilst the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE) acts as the lead agency in tackling ELET, an Inter-Ministerial Committee should be set up by the end of 2014 to address ELET across areas and Ministries. Moreover an 'Early School Leaving Unit' will be constituted by the end of 2014 comprised of representatives of different divisions within MEDE that have a direct contribution to make towards reducing ELET. Finally, also by the end of 2014, an 'Early School Leaving Working Group' will be set up that will work with schools and other bodies at local level to assist them in identifying the needs of children and young people and help them to develop preventative measures specific to local conditions.

In order to achieve the objectives of the ELET strategy in the **Netherlands**, agreements were concluded throughout the country between contact municipalities represented by regions, general secondary and vocational secondary schools and the national government. These 'covenants' set out long-term performance agreements.

Although in Austria there is no coordinating body for the comprehensive ELET strategy as a whole, there is a coordinating inter-ministerial body for 'Youth Coaching' – one of the main measures to combat early leaving – and an inter-ministerial steering group to coordinate all activities related to the implementation of the newly introduced policy initiative 'compulsory education until the age of 18', which also responds to the need to combat early leaving.

In Bulgaria and Romania, cooperation mechanisms are being established as part of a recent or developing strategy.

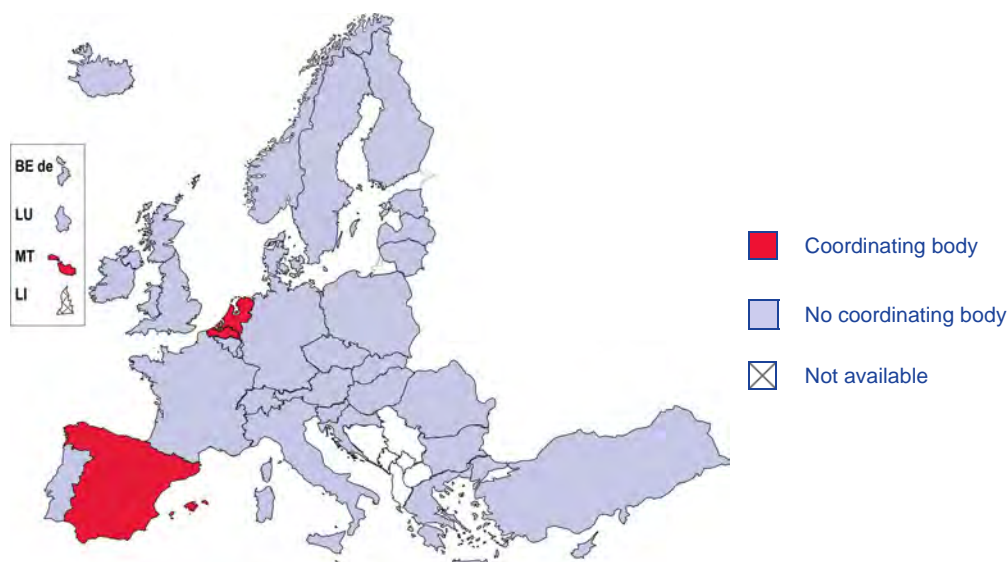
In **Bulgaria**, a 'Coordination Mechanism' is planned to be set up bringing together the ministries in the area of education and science with culture, agriculture and food, youth and sport, regional development, interior and justice, as well as local authorities, NGOs and citizens. Under this Coordination Mechanism a 'Framework Agreement' between the national authorities and other ELET stakeholders will be developed with a view to implementing the strategy.

In **Romania**, an inter-ministerial body has been created to oversee the cross-government policies targeting young people. The members represent the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Labour, the Anti-Drug Agency, and the Ministry for Regional Development.

In Italy, policies to tackle early leaving are not yet incorporated into a comprehensive strategy, yet some steps have recently been taken to reinforce cross-government cooperation.

A Forum for Lifelong Guidance to tackle the problem of students dropping out has been established within the **Italian** Ministry of Education Universities and Research. Other members of this Forum are: the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labour, the State/Region conference, the Institute for professional development of workers (ISFOL), the Italian Manufacturers' Association (*Confindustria*), the Union of Chambers of Commerce (*Unioncamere*) and some experts from universities. This Forum has recently been merged into a steering committee, set up within the State/Regions Conference, which has established coordination and cooperation mechanisms for lifelong guidance among the various stakeholders.

Figure 4.2: Creation of a central/top-level coordinating body to tackle ELET, 2013/14



Explanatory note

A coordinating body can support cooperation on ELET at national level between ministries/agencies, and facilitate the coordination of all stakeholders. It can also raise awareness of the problems of early leaving and ensure long-term political commitment.

Country-specific note

Belgium (BE fr): The decree of 21st November 2013 on policy cooperation between the bodies responsible for compulsory education and the youth service to enhance young people's well-being at school, school reintegration, prevention of violence and vocational guidance, envisages the setting-up of a coordinating committee in the 2014/15 school year.

Furthermore, informal mechanisms sometimes exist for coordinating early leaving policies, but the benefits these bring may be limited since they might not be continued when policy priorities change.

In the **United Kingdom (England)**, for example, local authorities are responsible for supporting young people in their area into education or training and for securing the existence of such provision. At central level, the Cabinet Office (which supports the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, ensuring effective development, coordination and implementation of policy and operations across all government departments) works with the Department for Education to coordinate cross-government actions to increase opportunities for young people and help them achieve their potential. Similarly in the **United Kingdom (Scotland)**, the coordination of ELET, under the overarching commitment of the 'Opportunities for All' strategy, became a joint responsibility of local partners, working together to offer the right support to each individual situation.

In **Switzerland**, too, there is no official coordinating body, but in practice, the 'Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education' (EDK) plays a pivotal role in addressing ELET. Moreover the 'Inter-institutional Cooperation' programme is a tool to support the rapid and sustainable (re-)integration of people into the education system or the labour market through coordinated action by the institutions involved (social affairs, education, employment, health, and services responsible for the integration of migrants, etc.).

There is still little country specific experience or evidence showing how coordination and cooperation mechanisms work in practice – the requirements, the constraints, the barriers, etc. As discussed in this chapter's sections on cross-government cooperation and multi-agency partnerships (4.1 and 4.3), some of the barriers to sustainable and institutionalised cooperation might be limited funding or time constraints.

4.3. Multi-agency partnerships in tackling ELET

Students who leave education and training early do so because of a 'cumulative process of disengagement' that can be related to the organisation of the education and training system, or to the personal, social, health or other difficulties young people may face (European Commission, 2013a). In this context, multi-agency partnerships can help tackle these issues, which are at the interface of different policy areas and professions. They can also ease young people's transition between different educational and life stages, and remove the barriers that might restrict their learning choices or access to information, advice and guidance.

Ideally, young people should be able to access individualised support by making contact with any of the partners engaged in preventing early leaving. School staff members or other professionals outside the school or training institution should then work together to identify the most appropriate support for the student on a case by case basis (ibid.).

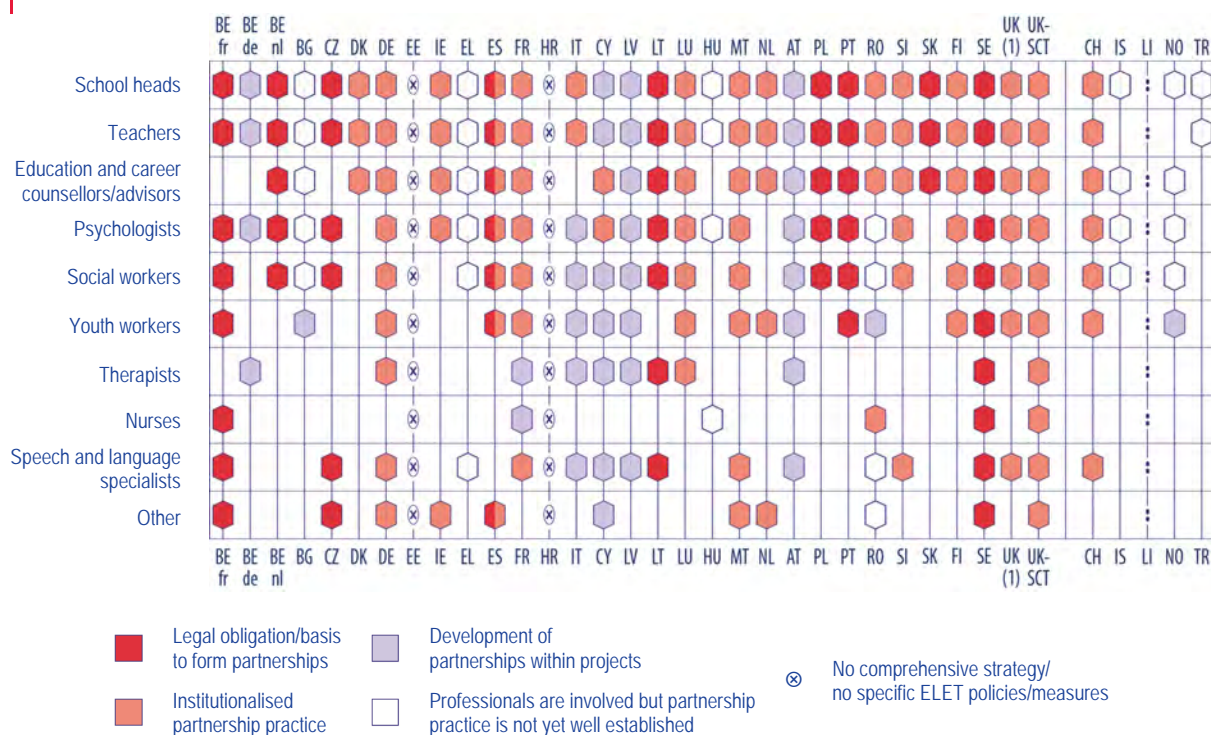
Figure 4.3 indicates the main categories of professionals working in partnership to address early leaving issues at school and community level and shows the status of professional partnerships where they exist. School heads and teachers are the key professionals responsible for tackling early leaving in all European countries; and Turkey reports that teachers and principals are the only people involved in tackling ELET. The roles of the different professionals involved in multi-agency work on ELET are summarised below:

- Generally speaking, **school heads** have a leading role in establishing and coordinating partnerships and teamwork among the different professionals inside and outside the school. In most cases, it will be within their remit to take or at least implement decisions on support measures for their students either on their own or in consultation with external partners.
- **Teachers** are in the forefront when it comes to identifying students at risk of leaving education and training early. They are able to detect early warning signs such as absenteeism or emerging learning difficulties, and they are in a position to learn about individual needs and family circumstances. Teachers therefore have a responsibility to share this information with the

relevant partners to ensure that the necessary support is provided to students in need. As they are also the first port of call for parents, they are fundamental in establishing effective home-school cooperation.

- Like school heads and teachers, in most European countries, **psychologists** have responsibilities for supporting students at risk of early leaving. They are often based in schools, but may be part of external organisations with direct links to schools. They help teachers to provide support, counselling and guidance to students and parents.
- **Education and career counsellors/advisers** are essential partners in most European countries. They work within or outside schools, depending on the country, and so may be internal or external partners (see also Chapter 5 on education and careers guidance).
- **Social workers or education welfare officers** are also important partners in many European countries as they support students and families in difficult situations, sometimes providing financial assistance or crisis intervention. They belong to services that are generally external to schools, even if in some European countries their members are school-based.
- **Youth workers** are involved in more than half of all countries in providing general support for young people as well as non-formal learning opportunities. As the youth policy area is often located in a separate ministry to education, there may be barriers to cooperating with educational professionals.
- **Speech and language specialists, therapists and nurses** are least involved in tackling early leaving at school level but may provide support for students with special educational needs.

Figure 4.3: Professionals involved in tackling ELET at school and community level, 2013/14



Source: Eurydice.

UK (1) = UK-ENG/WLS/NIR

Country-specific notes (Figure 4.3)

The other professional involved are:

| | |
|--|--|
| BE fr: Mediators | MT: Other specialised professionals according to individual students' circumstances and needs; colleges principals, senior officials at central institutions and curriculum leaders as well as emotional and behavioural difficulties professionals |
| CZ: Employment officers | NL: The police |
| DE: Special needs teachers and subject teachers | RO: Mediators and local authorities' representatives |
| IE: Pastoral care staff | SE: Physicians and special needs education specialists |
| ES: Social mediators and social educators | UK-SCT: Community learning and development and third sector staff |
| CY: Specialist professionals helping individual students with specific problems | |

Belgium (BE fr): The legal basis for the cooperation of these professionals is the 2013 decree on organising policy cooperation between compulsory education and the youth service to promote young people's well-being at school and the prevention of violence, and to improve school reintegration and vocational guidance. This cooperation will take effect from the school year 2014/15.

Czech Republic: At school level education, career guidance is provided by teachers specifically trained for education and career guidance (see Figure 5.5 for more info). The involvement of speech therapists mainly concerns ISCED 1.

Malta: Social workers, social support workers as well as speech and language therapists are part of the psycho-social services in schools.

Iceland: Multi-agency partnerships exist at primary and lower secondary level, but not at upper secondary level.

The figure thus shows that in the majority of countries a large number of professions are involved in tackling early leaving. In many of them ⁽⁵⁾, seven or more of these groups of professionals are reported to be cooperating.

The basis on which these partnerships are established varies from country to country. Generally, the partnerships are not always established specifically to tackle early leaving, but where they exist, even within a wider action framework, they make an important contribution to preventing and tackling early leaving (see National Information Sheets for a complete overview of multi-agency partnership practices).

In Belgium (French and Flemish Communities), the Czech Republic, Spain, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal and Sweden, there is a legal framework, which in some cases takes the form of a legal obligation to form partnerships and cooperate with one another. In Spain, the involvement of the different professionals is also well established. Generally, however, a legal framework does not guarantee effective partnerships, but it does create a basis for legitimacy, funding and resources.

As an example, schools in **Lithuania** have a school child welfare commission. Apart from teaching staff and the specialist professions based in schools, the school works with external agencies such as social pedagogical services, non-governmental organisations (NGO's), health care professionals, legal representatives and other specialists. Legislation requires the cooperation and mutual assistance of all persons involved in the childcare process: local communities, NGOs, and state and municipal institutions, agencies, businesses and other organisations.

In a second group of countries, which includes Denmark, Germany, Ireland, France (for certain professionals), Italy (for certain professionals), Malta, Romania (for certain professionals), Slovenia and the United Kingdom, partnership practice is well established, i.e. teams work together in a structured and institutionalised way. In Luxembourg and the Netherlands, the partnership is more specifically related to guidance (see also Chapter 5 on guidance), and in Finland it is linked to the youth guarantee (see also Section 4.5).

As an example of institutionalised partnership practice **Ireland** can be mentioned, where the whole-school guidance plan provides an overarching framework for student support, including special educational needs and mental health. It also provides a clear description of roles, responsibilities and practices. The student support team is the core element of the student support system in a school and may meet on a weekly or fortnightly basis to discuss concerns and to develop a plan for dealing with each concern. This may involve providing in-school support for the young person or deciding that external help is needed ⁽⁶⁾.

⁽⁵⁾ Belgium (French Community), Germany, Spain, France, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Austria, Romania, Sweden and across the United Kingdom

⁽⁶⁾ http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-reports/Well_Being_PP_Schools_Guidelines_Summary.pdf

Several countries are in the process of creating and strengthening partnerships within projects. In Austria, this project-based partnership development takes place within the existing strategic actions against early leaving.

Another example of project-based partnership development can be found in the **German-speaking Community of Belgium**, where it takes place within the 'time-out' projects, based on case management.

In **Latvia**, almost 50 ESF-funded projects implement support measures to tackle ELET, and cooperation between specialists is among the main evaluation criteria for these projects.

In such cases, the creation of partnerships may be a condition for receiving project-based funding. However, these partnerships may not be sustainable as the funding is often limited to the duration of the project. At the same time, funding can be a strong incentive for developing partnerships where they are not yet common practice.

A final group of countries include those that are just beginning to establish cooperation between professionals. This is the case in Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Romania (for certain professionals), Iceland, Norway and Turkey. In these countries, relevant partners and services have been identified and invited to cooperate in initiatives against early leaving. However, in some cases, the partnerships are not restricted to the nominated parties but have been left open and flexible intentionally so that they may be adapted to specific situations and to the individual needs of young people.

In decentralised education systems, the responsibility for developing and implementing measures to tackle early leaving rests also with authorities other than the top-level education authority, which means different forms of partnerships may exist within the same country.

In **Spain**, for example, each Autonomous Community develops specific ELET measures within its territory, and these may vary between Communities. While the professionals involved are generally the same in all Communities, they are partnered up in different ways depending on the specific measures. Partnerships with professionals from outside school depend on the agreements established with each relevant education authority.

In **Sweden**, as municipalities are required by law to provide education and are therefore responsible at local level for how different measures and policies are carried out, there are many differences between municipalities in the practice of multi-agency partnerships.

4.4. Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of cooperation between the parties involved in ELET

The active involvement and cooperation of stakeholders at national, regional, local and school level is crucial for reducing ELET rates. However, establishing effective and sustainable cooperation among all these different parties can be challenging and takes time to develop (European Commission, 2013a). Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of cooperation between them can help to clarify roles and responsibilities and improve collaboration.

Very few European countries have mechanisms in place to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of cooperation between the parties involved in tackling early leaving. In the Netherlands and the United Kingdom (Scotland), stakeholder cooperation is systematically monitored and evaluated, while in Finland and Switzerland it is an explicit requirement in policies to reduce early leaving (see Figure 4.4).

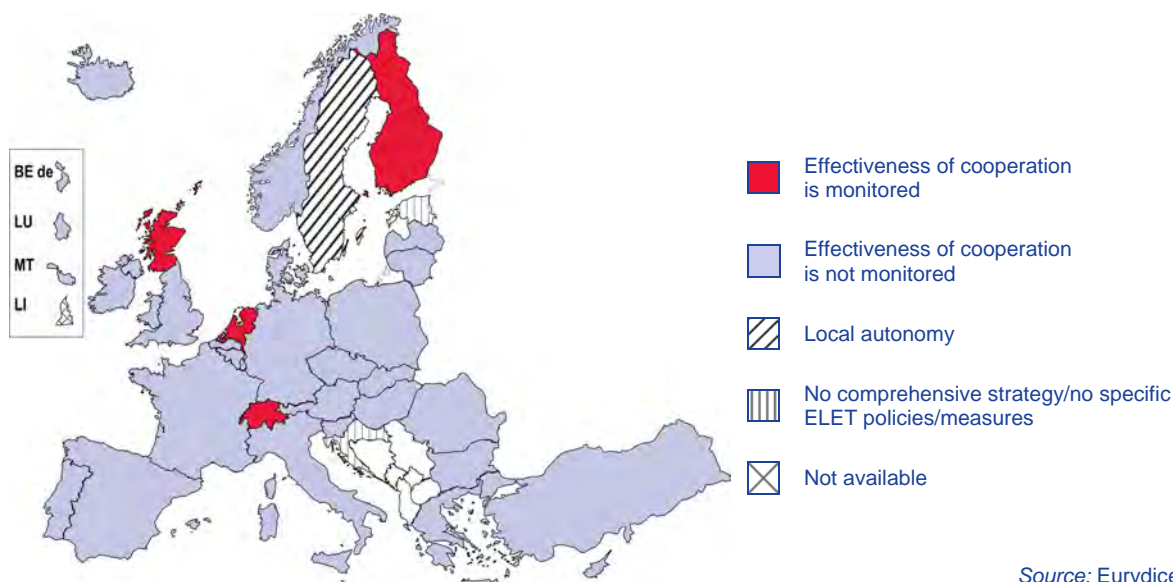
In the **Netherlands**, regional cooperation is one of the elements being evaluated. This assessment is mostly related to the structure and distribution of tasks, roles and responsibilities. The conclusions of the evaluations, which can be divided into three categories, have led to changes in regional cooperation: some regions came to the conclusion that one or more stakeholders were missing in the cooperation structure; many regions felt the need to adjust the scope of regional cooperation; about more than a quarter of the regions requested changes in the cooperation structure.

In **Finland**, the implementation of the youth guarantee, which brings together the main actions to combat ELET, is being monitored. The first evaluation by the Ministry of Labour has been available since March 2014. Some of the main results concerning cooperation between stakeholders are that: actions under the youth guarantee have increased awareness of the current state of young people and their need for services, and they have also increased collaboration among different organisations; more than half of the bodies involved (employment offices, municipalities, employers, educational institutions and others) have changed their procedures to better serve young people; and the monitoring of statistics on young people is being improved and unified so that services can be better planned to serve the needs of young people. The evaluation report suggests, amongst other things, the following development needs: a multi-professional approach for services and further multi-sector cooperation between authorities; and the compatibility of data systems to enable the shared use of electronic information ⁽⁷⁾.

In the **United Kingdom (Scotland)**, the Community Planning Partnerships (CPP) are regularly audited. The conclusions of the audit report 'Improving Community Planning in Scotland' mention that CPP boards 'have no real authority to make decisions that commit partners to action. (...) Nor are the incentives sufficient to change behaviours' (Audit Scotland, 2013, pp. 11-13). And more specifically about barriers to cooperation it says that 'improving public services therefore needs to have a 'whole-system' approach where costs and benefits are shared between partners. But organisational boundaries and financial regulations can get in the way of making change of that kind'.

In **Switzerland**, the evaluation report on the implementation of 'VET Case Management' explicitly includes an assessment of the cooperation and coordination of regions (cantons), external stakeholders and the Confederation. The main success factors identified are the following: the body responsible for implementation should be located at the higher levels of the administrative hierarchy, it should also be seen as actively steering initiatives and be able to work across institutional barriers. Professionals from different fields who collaborate should have a high level of experience working with young people and should work almost full-time on case management. The main challenges of governance and coordination are a clear definition of roles, avoiding duplication and managing gaps in the provision of support. Joint and coordinated action is still rare. The work of each autonomous department is self-directed and operates in parallel to others. Success still depends a lot on the individuals involved, while the necessary organisational changes are difficult to get underway and require strong monitoring.

Figure 4.4: Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of cooperation in tackling ELET, 2013/14



In other countries, the existing strategies, policies and/or measures to reduce early leaving may involve reporting obligations, although there may not be an explicit requirement to evaluate cooperation between the parties concerned. Even in the absence of indicators on cooperation,

⁽⁷⁾ http://www.tem.fi/files/39775/TEMjul_15_2014_web_14052014.pdf

however, the evaluation of early leaving policies can give an indication of how successful cooperation is, for example, when cooperation is identified as a factor of success or failure of a policy or measure.

In **France**, for example, the evaluation of the 'Social experimentations' pilot projects creating a local network of stakeholders from different institutions and professions to comprehensively address ELET shows that partners working together on a new project need to get to know each other first, they need to define their roles, agree on a common approach to ELET and create a 'common culture'. Some elements are considered necessary: formalising the exchange/flow of information and ideas, and, ideally, having an external coordinator who is visible to all partners, has authority and is available for both formal and informal meetings. Partners also need to overcome the initial barriers linked to their respective institutional backgrounds. School leaders play an essential role in the project as their engagement is a prerequisite for its success; the stability of the team is also important as it facilitates learning, the exchange of ideas and continuity of action ⁽⁸⁾.

In **Austria**, the final report on the first stage of the 'Youth Coaching' initiative revealed a need for improvement in communication and cooperation processes. The necessary changes were put into practice following implementation of the initiative in all provinces. Involving parents is a constant challenge but at the same time one of the main success factors. Trust between schools and Youth Coaches needs to be built and this takes time. Transparency of procedures is an important element. In particular, new tasks linked to new procedures will only be felt as increasing the work load if they do not show results. Schools can also be reluctant to cooperate if they feel that accepting Youth Coaching services means that their own efforts have failed. The general conclusion is that mutual benefit from cooperation is necessary and that partners are open to cooperating when they feel that the initiative helps to improve their own systems ⁽⁹⁾.

Finally, where monitoring and evaluation is only carried out at local level, as in Sweden, national level information is not available.

In countries where the effectiveness of stakeholder cooperation on tackling early leaving has been monitored and evaluated, the findings show that once the relevant partners have been identified, invited to participate and the roles allocated and explained, a learning process needs to be initiated. In this way cooperation barriers can progressively be overcome and a shared ownership developed. Partners need to build up knowledge of each other (institutional culture, language, practices, etc.) and trust. Successful cooperation and partnership building encompasses developing and nurturing a shared understanding of how to address the issue of early leaving. Another stated prerequisite for shared ownership is to harmonise the objectives and approaches of the different sectors and professions.

Some of the barriers encountered in establishing effective cooperation between professionals are stakeholders' resistance to allowing others into their territory (schools in particular) and their unwillingness to be open about their difficulties and the actions they have taken. Another important barrier is linked to the investment in the time and resources needed for cooperation, which often does not correspond to the amount of funding, if any, allocated to this task. Stakeholders need to experience that partnerships work and contribute positively to outcomes rather than just increase their workload.

It seems, moreover, that where partnerships are not yet fully established their effectiveness very much depends on the commitment of the parties involved. The success of developing cross-sector cooperation and multi-agency partnerships therefore also depends on the training available to enable professionals to learn how to cooperate effectively.

⁽⁸⁾ http://www.experimentation.jeunes.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/Rapport_Final_Evaluation_AP1_267.pdf

⁽⁹⁾ <http://www.equi.at/dateien/JU-Endbericht-IHS-ueberarbei.pdf>

4.5. Cross-sector and cross-government cooperation in the development and implementation of youth guarantee schemes

The Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee ⁽¹⁰⁾ aims to contribute to three of the Europe 2020 strategy targets, namely employment (75 % of the age range 20-64 should be employed), early school leaving (rates should be below 10 %) and poverty and social exclusion (20 million people should be lifted out). As such, the youth guarantee is one of the tools recommended at European level to reduce early leaving from education and training by easing the transition of young people to the labour market. Youth guarantees are mainly embedded within employment policies. However, as one of the main reasons for youth unemployment is inadequate or incomplete education and training, measures to improve employability by preventing early leaving or encouraging young people to re-enter education and training to gain qualifications and skills, are therefore important elements of the youth guarantee.

The Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving has a focus on strengthening the link between education and training systems and the employment sector ⁽¹¹⁾. The Council Recommendation on the Youth Guarantee, moreover, emphasises that building up partnership-based approaches should be implemented and that effective cross-sector cooperation is crucial. The Commission therefore recommends structural reforms, for example, to enable public employment services to work in closer cooperation with other stakeholders, and to allow partnerships between trade unions, employers' organisations, educational establishments and public authorities with a view to encouraging increased participation in education and training ⁽¹²⁾. However, country policy analysis, such as undertaken by the European Commission's Thematic Working Group Early School Leaving, concludes that, in many European countries, cross-sector cooperation appears as one of the weaker elements in the fight against early leaving (European Commission, 2013a).

All EU Member States have submitted their Youth Guarantee Implementation Plans and are now taking first steps in setting up their Youth Guarantee Schemes ⁽¹³⁾.

Several countries/regions had already been developing policies to improve the transition from education to work and to prevent youth unemployment before the 2013 Council Recommendation on establishing a youth guarantee. The schemes that have been put in place have very similar objectives and principles to those proposed by the Council. Evidence shows that partnership approaches in implementing these have been crucial.

In **Austria**, for example, the youth guarantee scheme is routed in the dual VET system. Introduced initially in 1998 as a 'safety net' for young people who were unable to find an apprenticeship place, in 2008, it became the 'training guarantee', developed by the Ministry of Science, Research and Economy, the Ministry of Education and Women's Affairs, the social partners and the Public Employment Service, who is funding it. The supra-company IVET scheme, including its cooperation mechanisms, has been evaluated several times ⁽¹⁴⁾.

In the **United Kingdom (Scotland)**, the Youth Employment strategy, introduced in 2012, contains the Scottish government commitment 'Opportunities for All' ⁽¹⁵⁾, and is delivered through partnership between local authorities, private, public and third sector employers, Skills Development Scotland (SDS), colleges, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the voluntary sector.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Council Recommendations of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee, OJ C 120, 26.4.2013.

⁽¹¹⁾ Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving, OJ C 191, 1.7.2011.

⁽¹²⁾ http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-14-13_en.htm

⁽¹³⁾ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1094&langId=en>

⁽¹⁴⁾ http://www.lrsocialresearch.at/files/Endbericht_UeBA_Evaluierung_final_LR.pdf

⁽¹⁵⁾ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0040/00408815.pdf>

In a number of EU Member States a youth guarantee scheme has been recently introduced, responding to the Council Recommendation. Establishing cooperation between the different policy sectors and stakeholders is a key element of these schemes.

Spain, for example, has recently approved the 2013-2016 Strategy for Entrepreneurship and Youth Employment ⁽¹⁶⁾, which seeks to reduce youth unemployment. Measures included in this strategy promote stronger cooperation between employment services, providers of vocational guidance, education and training centres and support services to ensure that all young people are fully informed of the services and support available.

In **Portugal**, the youth guarantee scheme is being implemented gradually, starting in 2014. Its implementation is coordinated by the public authorities and public employment services and involves many partners, including NGOs, social sector institutions, enterprises and business associations. The work will be developed through a partnership approach and a committee will coordinate and monitor the Youth Guarantee. It is envisaged that these partners will participate according to their area of expertise and will mobilise, not only their organisations and resources, but also the local and regional stakeholders with whom they cooperate, thus rebuilding and strengthening the networks, in order to ensure opportunities for young people and to address their needs.

In **Finland**, the Youth Guarantee scheme ⁽¹⁷⁾ is based on cooperation between the Ministry of Employment and the Economy and the Ministry of Education and Culture, as well as other ministries, national authorities and local authorities who also monitor its implementation and evaluate the development needs of the services. It was founded on a 'public-private-people-partnership' approach with the young people being active participants in shaping their own future. The overall umbrella programme ensures systematic national coordination and networking.

Finally, in some countries where the development of a youth guarantee scheme is still in the early stages, cooperation between policy areas and other stakeholders has already been initiated.

In **Ireland**, the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan ⁽¹⁸⁾ was completed by the Department of Social Protection with the participation of the Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in December 2013.

In **Slovenia**, the development of the youth guarantee ⁽¹⁹⁾ involved young people's representatives and youth organisations, the ministries responsible for education, labour, economic development and public administration, to establish a connection between the labour market and the education system. The Special Working Group, including representatives of all responsible ministries together with representatives of young people and the social partners, will monitor the implementation of the youth guarantee and prepare a final report for the period 2014-2015 for submission to the Government of the Republic of Slovenia.

The examples above show that cross-government and cross-sector cooperation is an essential element of the development and implementation of youth guarantees and similar schemes. It may serve as an example for strengthening cooperation among the stakeholders involved in the strategies, policies and measures to tackle ELET.

⁽¹⁶⁾ http://www.empleo.gob.es/ficheros/garantiajuvenil/documentos/EEEJ_Documento.pdf

⁽¹⁷⁾ http://www.nuorisotakuu.fi/en/youth_guarantee

⁽¹⁸⁾ <https://www.welfare.ie/en/downloads/Youth-Guarantee-Implementation-Plan.pdf>

⁽¹⁹⁾ <http://www.mddsz.gov.si/en/newsroom/news/article/1939/7340/0055456df1c1e241449fb5209624ad68>

CHAPTER 5: THE ROLE OF EDUCATION AND CAREER GUIDANCE IN TACKLING EARLY LEAVING

After having presented an overview of the wide range of policies and measures for reducing the numbers of students leaving education and training early (ELET) in previous chapters, this chapter focuses on one particular measure, namely education and career guidance at school level. This report refers to education and career guidance as the practice used to support students in their choice of education and career path. It receives special attention in this document as guidance is identified by a large majority of European countries as beneficial in addressing early leaving (see Figure 3.2). This chapter will therefore examine the part played by guidance in general education with respect to the prevention, intervention and compensation measures introduced to combat early leaving. Chapter 6 will examine similar measures in the area of vocational education and training (VET).

This chapter is divided into five sections. First, it analyses how education and career guidance is used to address early leaving. It questions to what extent policies for reducing early leaving in Europe are guidance-oriented and shows whether guidance is perceived in most countries as a prevention and/or intervention measure. Guidance in both primary and secondary education is examined.

The second section focuses on the arrangements for education and career guidance in schools. It shows that guidance is part of the compulsory curriculum in at least one level of education in most countries and is therefore provided in the classroom. The section also presents the main objectives of guidance provision, which include providing students with support, informing them about the choices open to them and developing the skills they need to make decisions about future education and work. This section also provides an overview of curriculum approaches to guidance at primary and secondary level, showing whether it is an integrated, separate or cross-curricular subject. Finally, this section looks at guidance delivered outside the classroom, through, for instance, extra-curricular activities.

The third section presents an overview of the types of staff responsible for providing education and career guidance at school. It discusses staff roles and describes the training they receive to meet the challenges of providing guidance, particularly to groups at risk of leaving early. This section shows that guidance counsellors, teachers qualified in guidance as well as other teachers are generally responsible for this provision. The type of staff involved is directly related to the way guidance is delivered in school.

In the fourth section, the report investigates the roles and tasks assigned to external providers which are mainly externally-based guidance services, but which cooperate closely with schools. The guidance duties of these services are wider than those of schools. They provide essential support to school staff, organise activities for students and also coordinate large-scale guidance initiatives and projects.

Finally, the last section of this chapter looks at guidance as a compensation measure for those young people who have already left education and training early and wish to re-enter the system. The analysis demonstrates that most countries consider guidance as a compensation measure and an essential part of actions undertaken by countries to provide opportunities for early leavers. Thus, guidance is delivered mainly through second-chance education programmes or when students re-enter mainstream education; guidance is also offered by specialised guidance services, through youth guarantees, and in some cases it is project-based.

5.1. Education and career guidance as a prevention or intervention measure

Education and career guidance plays an essential part in motivating students and keeping them engaged in education. It not only provides students with information on the study options and work prospects available, but also helps them to identify the careers that may interest them. Guidance staff also support young people in developing the skills they need to make good decisions and they enable young people to manage their choices better and take responsibility for their own personal growth and development. In this respect, high quality guidance contributes to reducing the risk of students leaving education early without adequate qualifications. Indeed, research shows that 'career information and guidance have become increasingly important as ways of reducing uncertainty of making choices that lead to unfavourable results, such as unemployment and social exclusion' (Lundahl, Nilsson, 2009, p. 27).

Education and career guidance is especially important when dealing with disadvantaged young people. It can help them to regain their self-confidence and give them the motivation to stay in school to obtain the qualifications needed for a successful career. Where they face particular problems, guidance counsellors can direct students to appropriate professional support. Some countries highlight that the role of guidance is also to reduce social, gender and ethnic inequalities. This is essential for tackling early leaving because the socio-economic status of the family, the cultural and linguistic background of young people as well as their gender are some of the main factors relating to individuals that may potentially lead them to leave education and training early (see Chapter 2).

The growing importance of guidance in preventing early leaving and in helping those who already show signs of disengagement from education is becoming increasingly clear to education authorities in European countries. The European Commission, too, recommends paying special attention to education and career guidance as a measure to tackle early leaving, and suggests that countries need strong and well-developed guidance systems (European Commission, 2013a).

Some European countries underline that there is a clear need to introduce education and career guidance from the early stages of compulsory education, and that students should have access to this guidance throughout their time in school. This is especially true for countries where the ELET rate is rather high (see Figure 1.1), for instance, in Spain and Romania.

Spain recognises that guidance plays a central role in the improvement of academic performance and the prevention of early leaving. It can help students in the process of social integration, improve their chances of success in the job market, and smooth the transition to adult life.

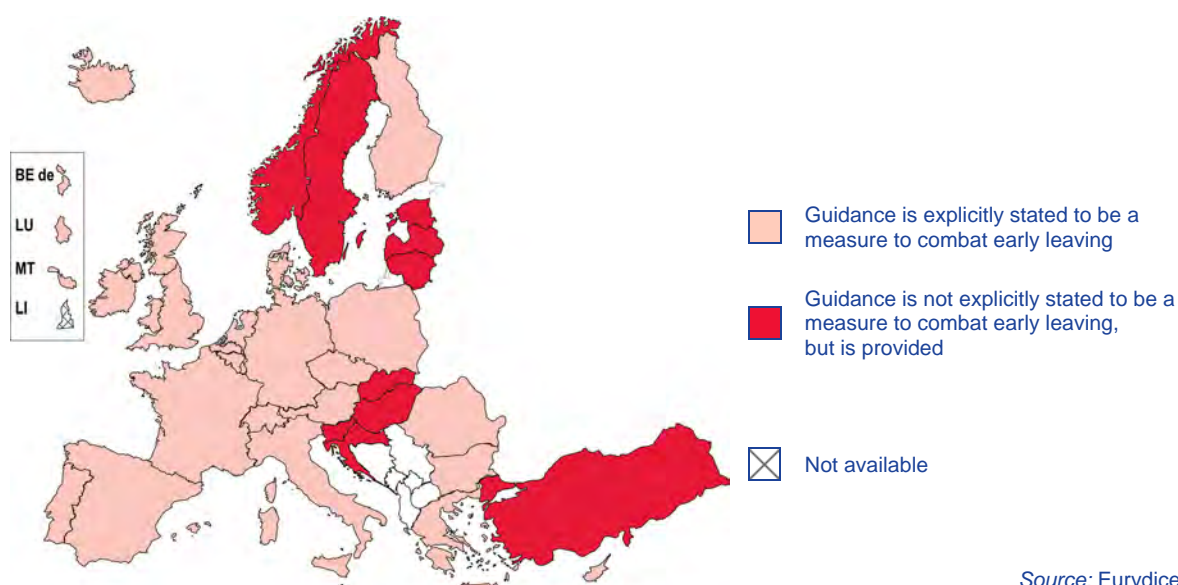
Romania sees education and career guidance as an important measure to prevent ELET in primary and secondary education, from the perspective of personal growth and development. The main aim is to identify and develop the skills, attitudes and knowledge that individuals need, from an early age, in order to enable to make sound choices and to effectively manage educational options and careers.

In this chapter, education and career guidance is considered to be a measure to tackle early leaving in countries where steering documents clearly state that preventing school failure or intervening when students are at risk of leaving education early is within the remit of guidance services/staff; and/or where steering documents specify that early leaving may be addressed through education and career guidance. This is the case, for example, within the framework of national strategies and/or plans for tackling early leaving from education and training (e.g. in Belgium (Flemish Community), Spain, the Netherlands and Austria).

Figure 5.1 shows that a large majority of European countries consider education and career guidance to be among the prevention and/or intervention measures for tackling early leaving in primary and

secondary education. In ten education systems, guidance is not seen as a specific measure to address early leaving. In some of these countries, namely, in Croatia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Slovakia and Sweden, this may be partially explained by the fact that ELET rates are not very high (see Figure 1.1) and therefore addressing early school leaving is not perceived as an educational priority. Moreover, in all these countries, except Croatia, education and career guidance is included in the curriculum and delivered in the classroom; whereas in Sweden, guidance is among the general objectives for education and its provision is an important task in schools (see Figure 5.2). In Croatia, the existing curriculum framework (adopted in 2010, but not yet implemented) includes guidance as a compulsory topic in secondary school programmes.

Figure 5.1: Education and career guidance as a prevention and/or intervention measure for addressing ELET in primary and general secondary education, 2013/14



Country specific note

Belgium (BE fr): According to provisions in steering documents entering in force in September 2014, education and career guidance is explicitly considered as a prevention and intervention measure to tackle ELET.

Developing education and career guidance as a measure to combat early leaving is underpinned in several European countries by actions plans, programmes and initiatives. In some cases, these are intended to improve guidance provision at school level. The changes proposed include reforms to compulsory curricula and to teacher education and training, as well as the expansion of guidance services within schools and the development of new guidance methods.

This is, for example, the case in **Bulgaria** (the project 'System of Career Guidance in School Education'), the **Czech Republic** (the project 'VIP Kariéra II') and **Germany** (actions set within a declaration on the design of career guidance). A few countries have created special bodies to expand the provision of guidance, as in **Cyprus** (National Lifelong Guidance Forum) and **Luxembourg** (Guidance Centre (*Maison de l'Orientation*)) – for more details see National Information Sheets).

Initiatives in many countries focus on education and career guidance as a measure to facilitate transitions. The Education Council highlighted in 2011 ⁽¹⁾ that strengthening guidance and counselling supports students in their career choices and in complex transitions within education or from education to employment. Special attention is given to guidance in some countries when students have to move from one stage of education to another and face challenges linked to these changes.

⁽¹⁾ Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving, OJ C 191, 1.7.2011.

Supporting transitions through guidance provision is especially critical in the education systems with early tracking ⁽²⁾, where streaming students into different educational pathways takes place at the end of primary education. In such circumstances, students may find themselves in educational tracks/programmes for which they are not suited because they were not sufficiently mature to make the right choice or because they did not receive appropriate education and career guidance. An unsuitable choice of pathway may result in a student becoming demotivated and eventually leaving education and training before gaining the necessary qualifications for progressing to the next stage (see also Section 2.2). Therefore, being recommended to follow the most appropriate track is among the factors which 'significantly decrease the risk of leaving school early' (Traag, Van der Velden 2011, p. 52). This is also the reason why the Netherlands have reinforced guidance procedures at the end of primary education, and Austria provides support to parents at the point when students are transferring to a different educational path. In Luxembourg, this issue is under discussion as part of on-going reforms.

One of the prime reasons for ELET in the **Netherlands** is a wrong career or study choice, it is hoped that by providing career guidance throughout school life and by forging closer links with the labour market, the number of young people who drop out due to choosing the wrong course can be reduced. An 'Action Plan for Career Orientation and Guidance' (2009-2012) has been implemented.

Moreover, guidance is reinforced during the transition from lower to upper secondary education or at the end of compulsory education to encourage and motivate students to continue their education beyond the compulsory stage (e.g. in Spain, Denmark, Malta, Romania, Finland and Switzerland). Intensive guidance is also crucial to support young people in making a successful transition from the end of compulsory education to the world of labour (e.g. the 'Education Chains' initiative in Germany and the Guidance Centre (*Maison de l'Orientation*) in Luxembourg – for more details see the National Information Sheets). Finally, some countries (e.g. Germany, Spain, Finland, Austria and Norway), place a special focus on guidance and support in the transition to adult life for disadvantaged young people who experience learning difficulties and do not get sufficient educational advice or support in their family environment.

Some major obstacles in implementing guidance as a measure to tackle early leaving have been mentioned by several European countries. For instance, Latvia draws attention to the lack of awareness of the relationship between guidance and educational success among local government and school leaders. Thus, guidance activities are not prioritised. A few countries experience difficulties related to the lack of staff responsible for education and career guidance in schools (see Section 5.3). Ireland reports that under current teacher allocation, schools make the decision locally to allocate hours to guidance provision. This may impact on early leaving in the long term, where less guidance provision is allocated within the school.

Finally, as far as the monitoring of the implementation is concerned, in most cases, education authorities supervise guidance processes in primary and secondary education. In Spain, for instance, it is the Sectorial Committee for Education that is in charge of supervising these actions in schools.

⁽²⁾ Early tracking takes place in Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Austria and Switzerland.

5.2. Education and career guidance at school

Schools have been given the main responsibility for implementing education and career guidance. It is important to underline that most education systems view the provision of education and career guidance as a primary duty and it is one of the general objectives of the education process. Schools are expected to create a learning environment that encourages students to develop their aspirations, manage their choices and take decisions about their future career. Some systems (e.g. Spain, Italy, Finland, Sweden and Norway) also specify that providing guidance, supporting students in their decision-making and preparing them to cope with the challenges of the real world are among the main tasks of all school staff. In the United Kingdom (England), schools have a statutory duty to provide access to career advice.

Education and career guidance is traditionally delivered through formally established school-based guidance or counselling services available to students (mainly on an individual basis). However, it is becoming increasingly popular as an area within core curricula, which include guidance-related objectives and so provide space for it in the classroom. The term 'curriculum' is used here to refer to any official steering document containing programmes of study or any of the following: learning content, objectives, attainment targets, guidelines on student assessment and syllabuses ⁽³⁾.

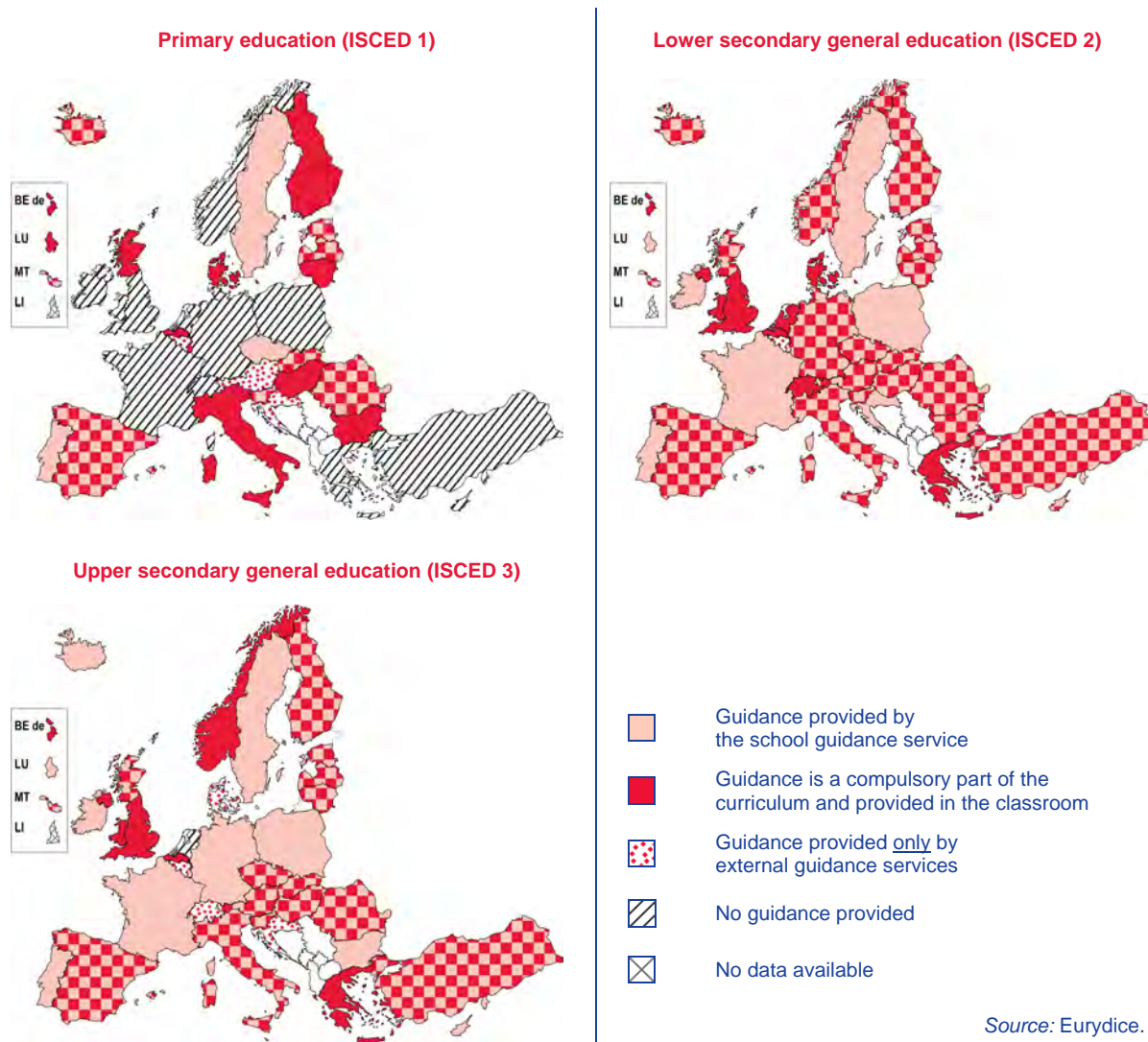
The trend of replacing the traditional one-to-one approach to guidance by a curriculum-based approach was highlighted by Cedefop as early as 2004 (Cedefop, Sultana, 2004). Indeed, when education and career guidance is made a compulsory curriculum subject, it is systematically provided to all students, whereas if it is left to guidance services to deliver, it may reach only those with specific needs. Thus, when guidance is provided through the curriculum, it may be considered as a preventive action to address early leaving; in contrast, when it is provided on individual basis through guidance services, it is mainly an intervention action, providing help for those who are already at risk.

Figure 5.2 represents these two main approaches to education and career guidance within schools (directed at all students through the curriculum or at individuals through school-based guidance or counselling services); it also shows the provision delivered by external specialist guidance bodies. These three forms of provision may coexist and complement each other by using different teaching methods and involving different participants. The maps show that all European countries have arrangements in place to make education and career guidance available to students in at least one level of education. However, the figure shows that in 13 countries/regions ⁽⁴⁾, guidance is addressed to students in secondary education and is not provided for those at primary level.

⁽³⁾ The terms 'steering documents' and 'curricula' are used interchangeably in this chapter.

⁽⁴⁾ Germany, Ireland, Greece, France, Cyprus, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, the United Kingdom (England and Wales), Norway, Switzerland and Turkey

Figure 5.2: Provision of education and career guidance in primary and general secondary education (ISCED 1, 2 and 3), 2013/14



Country specific notes

Croatia: According to the National Curriculum Framework (2010), education and career guidance is to be included in the curriculum. Although it has been adopted in law, this framework has not yet been implemented.

Switzerland: Each canton has its own regulations for education and career guidance. At ISCED level 3, the external services have a permanent office in most schools of French-speaking Switzerland.

When analysing in greater detail the ways in which education and career guidance is provided across the three levels of education (see Figure 5.2), it is clear that in most European countries, schools guarantee support for students through an in-school guidance service. In some countries, this is the only way guidance is provided in schools, or it is the only form of guidance provision in certain levels of education. This is the case at primary level in the Czech Republic; at lower and upper secondary level in France, Ireland, Luxembourg and Poland; and at upper secondary level in Germany, Cyprus and Iceland; and at all three levels of education in Portugal and Sweden.

Education and career guidance may be an integral part of top-level curricula for one or several levels of education. About half of all education systems have introduced guidance into the curriculum starting from primary level, but the vast majority of countries have done so for lower and/or upper secondary

education. When guidance is a compulsory topic in the curriculum, it is generally delivered in the classroom (teaching approaches are dealt with in Section 5.2.2).

Furthermore, the provision of education and career guidance may be organised externally through specialist external guidance services, which exist in most European countries (see Section 5.4). Their role is especially important where guidance is not included in the compulsory curriculum or provided by the school guidance service, as in the case of the French Community of Belgium (at all three levels), Austria (at primary level), Croatia (at primary and upper secondary level), Denmark and Switzerland (at upper secondary level).

European countries report that they suggest a broad approach to education and career guidance, which links the different forms of provision and uses a wide range of methods. It is worth noting that due to school autonomy, schools are in many cases free to plan and organise a variety of activities related to guidance. In several countries (whether guidance is included in their top-level curricula or not), schools are obliged to describe this provision in their working documents. For example, they may include this in their school development or action plan, in their school-level curriculum or in a more specific guidance plan. A requirement to document guidance provision exists in Ireland, Spain, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Iceland and Norway.

In **Ireland**, although guidance is not considered a curriculum subject, it is a universal entitlement to be included within the whole school guidance plan. It is provided in career guidance classes, through visits to careers and education exhibitions as well through one-to-one guidance sessions. The whole school guidance programme links with other compulsory subjects and must ensure that the guidance needs of all students are met.

In **Poland**, the school head is responsible for the organisation of education and career guidance. Schools have an internal professional guidance system, which includes separate classes dedicated to the different educational paths. The system defines the way guidance-related tasks are implemented and designates the staff responsible. The taught time allocated to guidance is set by the school head.

In **Iceland**, the upper secondary school curriculum guide must include a description of the school's policy and objectives for educational and vocational guidance and counselling, and it must also describe how the school fulfils its role and duties in this regard.

In other cases, school-level curricula should identify school needs in terms of guidance, as well as its objectives and the methods used (both in the classroom and by guidance services) and the time allocated to this topic. Moreover, schools should refer to any cooperation with families and external partners, as well as highlight staff needs for continuous professional development (CPD) in guidance matters.

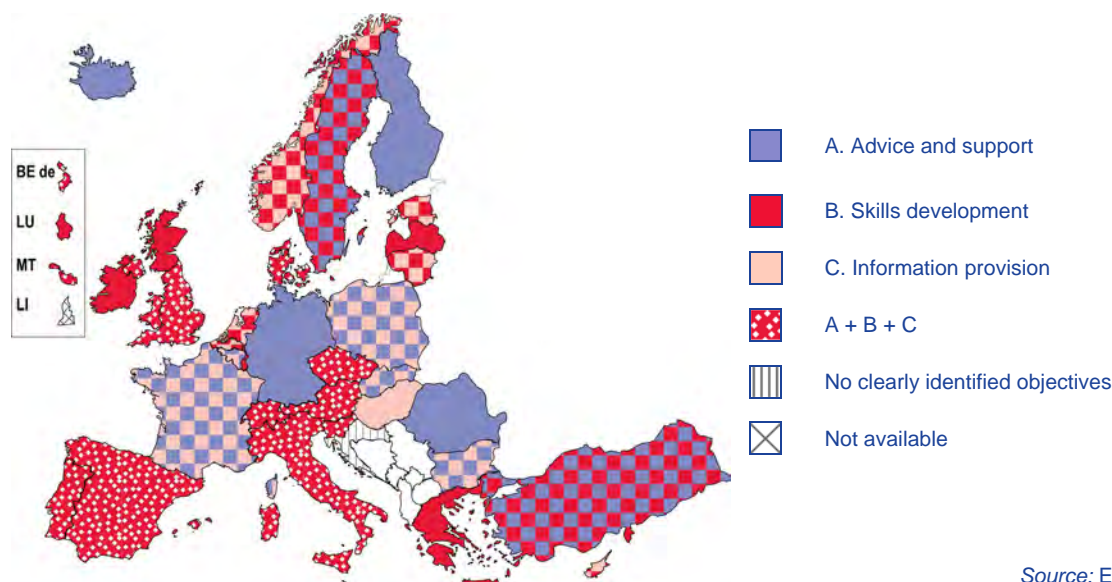
5.2.1. Objectives of education and career guidance at school

The goals of education and career guidance largely depend on the definitions of guidance in different countries (Cedefop, Sultana, 2004). There are two main ways that the term 'guidance' is understood: it may be understood to mean the support given to students in choosing which education or career option to take; or it may mean psychological counselling and the provision of the additional learning support that some countries consider essential, especially when dealing with students who are at risk of leaving school early. Although it is sometimes difficult to disentangle these, this report primarily considers guidance as the practice used to support students in their choice of education and career path.

European countries assign three main objectives for education and career guidance at school level. They refer to providing advice and support to students, developing their individual skills and competences as well as informing them about career choices (see Figure 5.3). More than a dozen

systems⁽⁵⁾ underline that all three objectives are assigned for guidance staff. These objectives play a part in reducing ELET rates as they contribute to preventing student disengagement and they provide the opportunity for early intervention when students show signs of the difficulties associated with leaving school early.

Figure 5.3: Main objectives for education and career guidance in primary and general secondary education, 2013/14



Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory note

The information in this Figure is based on national curricula or other steering documents related to guidance provision in schools.

Country specific notes

Croatia: According to the National Curriculum Framework (2010) the development of skills is one of the main objectives of education and career guidance. Although the framework has been adopted into law, it has not yet been implemented.

Netherlands: The objective related to information provision is generally directed at primary education, while the skills objective is for secondary education.

The first, and most widespread, objective for guidance professionals is to provide advice and support to students to enable them to make the right choices in relation to their educational and work opportunities, and to help them meet the challenges they will face in their adult lives. Several countries (e.g. the Czech Republic, Germany, France, Romania, Finland, Iceland and Turkey) specify that guidance should also pay special attention to students at risk of early leaving. These may include under-achieving students, those who are frequently absent from school, or those with behavioural difficulties. In such cases, guidance can help in the early detection of learning problems or lack of motivation, as well as in providing a holistic approach to supporting individuals (European Commission, 2010). The role of guidance is therefore to provide continuing and long-term support to improve students' self-confidence and motivation for learning and to help them stay in education.

The second guidance objective is to help students develop their individual skills and aptitudes and thereby enable them to manage their future educational and career choices. Around a third of countries give particular importance to the development of skills such as developing self-knowledge, self-awareness, self-assessment, problem solving and decision-making skills. Guidance should motivate and encourage students to explore their own personality so that they begin to understand

⁽⁵⁾ Belgium (German-speaking Community), the Czech Republic, Denmark, Spain, Italy, Malta, Austria, Portugal, Slovenia, the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) and Switzerland

what interests them, as well as help them make informed decisions and manage their own way through the myriad of opportunities for further learning and/or work. Rather than relying solely on guidance professionals, students should be helped to identify their own interests, strengths and weaknesses; they should be taught to search for their own information; and to take their own decisions. Guidance staff should help prepare them to face the challenges, choices and responsibilities of adulthood. To give some national examples:

The curriculum of the **Czech Republic** highlights the need for students to acquire various learning skills and to assess their effectiveness in personal study and development; it also includes dealing with mental health issues during studies and work.

In **Greece**, guidance and counselling in secondary education is designed to support students in exploring their personality, so that they make the right choices when deciding on future educational and professional pathways. The development of self-awareness, decision-making skills and skills related to the critical assessment of information are the basis for the design and development of guidance and counselling.

Latvia mentions that guidance should enable students to identify skills, abilities and interests in order to make informed decisions about education and career choices; and to help them use these skills and experiences in managing their own career path.

Norway reports that education and career guidance: helps students to become aware of their own values, interests and abilities; fosters self-awareness and self-knowledge; assists their ability to make their own choices about education and work; and assess the consequences of their choices or prevent the wrong choice being made.

These personal skills are complemented by information skills in Belgium (German-speaking Community) and the United Kingdom (Scotland), thus implying that students should be able to search for and process information themselves. In the case of Scotland, it is specified that learners can expect schools to help them access resources to inform their choices.

The **Scottish** Curriculum for Excellence (2011) specifies that 'young people (...) will build on these skills in personal learning planning to develop self-awareness and the confidence to gather and organise educational and occupational information, enabling them to better manage future learning and work pathways.

Finally, the third objective of education and career guidance is to provide students with sufficient information about educational and career pathways to make informed choices. Helping them understand the importance of education and training and the need for lifelong learning, and improving their knowledge of the world of work is essential. Guidance providers have to make sure that careers information is understood, that young people know how to use it, that it is regarded as trustworthy, and that it corresponds to the person's level of career development and maturity (OECD, 2003).

For example, the **Hungarian** National Core Curriculum underlines that schools must provide a comprehensive overview of the world of work, and provide information appropriate to students' age, interests and level of attainment.

This type of information is especially important in today's world where education and career patterns change quickly and young people have to constantly adapt to a dynamic job market and to grasp further education and working opportunities, nationally as well as internationally.

In **Norway**, for example, guidance involves information about education and careers, educational pathways in Norway and other countries, knowledge of the labour market both nationally and internationally and training in using various counselling tools.

5.2.2. Teaching approaches in the curriculum

The place allocated to education and career guidance in school curricula in European countries tends to reflect the importance attached to this area. Figure 5.2 gives an overview of its place at school at three levels of education: primary, lower and upper secondary.

Where education and career guidance is included in the compulsory core curriculum, it may be provided in the classroom as a separate subject, a topic integrated into other subjects or as a

compulsory cross-curricular topic. Figure 5.4 shows which approaches to guidance have been taken by countries and at which ages they apply.

In nine education systems, central level curricula embed education and career guidance as a compulsory separate (or stand-alone) subject⁽⁶⁾ in at least one of the three levels of education covered. The name of the separate subject varies between countries, for example, it is referred to as school career guidance (Greece) and counselling and career planning/counselling and guidance (Turkey). The length of stand-alone courses varies depending on the country. It may last from one year (e.g. Cyprus) to eleven years (e.g. Romania).

In more than a dozen countries, education and career guidance is integrated into several subjects or educational/learning areas, whether or not it is also taught as a separate compulsory subject. A learning area brings together the content or objectives from several closely related disciplines or subjects into a discrete teaching block. The subjects incorporating aspects of education and career guidance include: social sciences (e.g. the Czech Republic, Latvia, Malta and Iceland), home economics and technologies (e.g. Bulgaria, Latvia and Malta), entrepreneurship (e.g. Bulgaria) and citizenship education (e.g. the Czech Republic), personal and social development (e.g. Malta), lifestyle and practical skills (e.g. Hungary). In the Czech Republic, preparation for working life is also carried out within the education area 'People and the World of Work' at upper secondary level. In Germany, the subjects in which education and career guidance is taught are decided at the level of each *Land*. The topic is usually taught over several years.

In some countries (e.g. Spain, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom (England) and Switzerland), education and career guidance is, at some point, a compulsory topic within the curriculum but schools (in case of Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom (England)) or regions (in case of Spain and Switzerland) are free to decide how it is delivered under arrangements for school or regional autonomy. For instance, schools may organise a specific module covering this topic or it may be introduced as a separate subject. In Germany and Austria, the organisation of the topic related to guidance depends on the educational pathway.

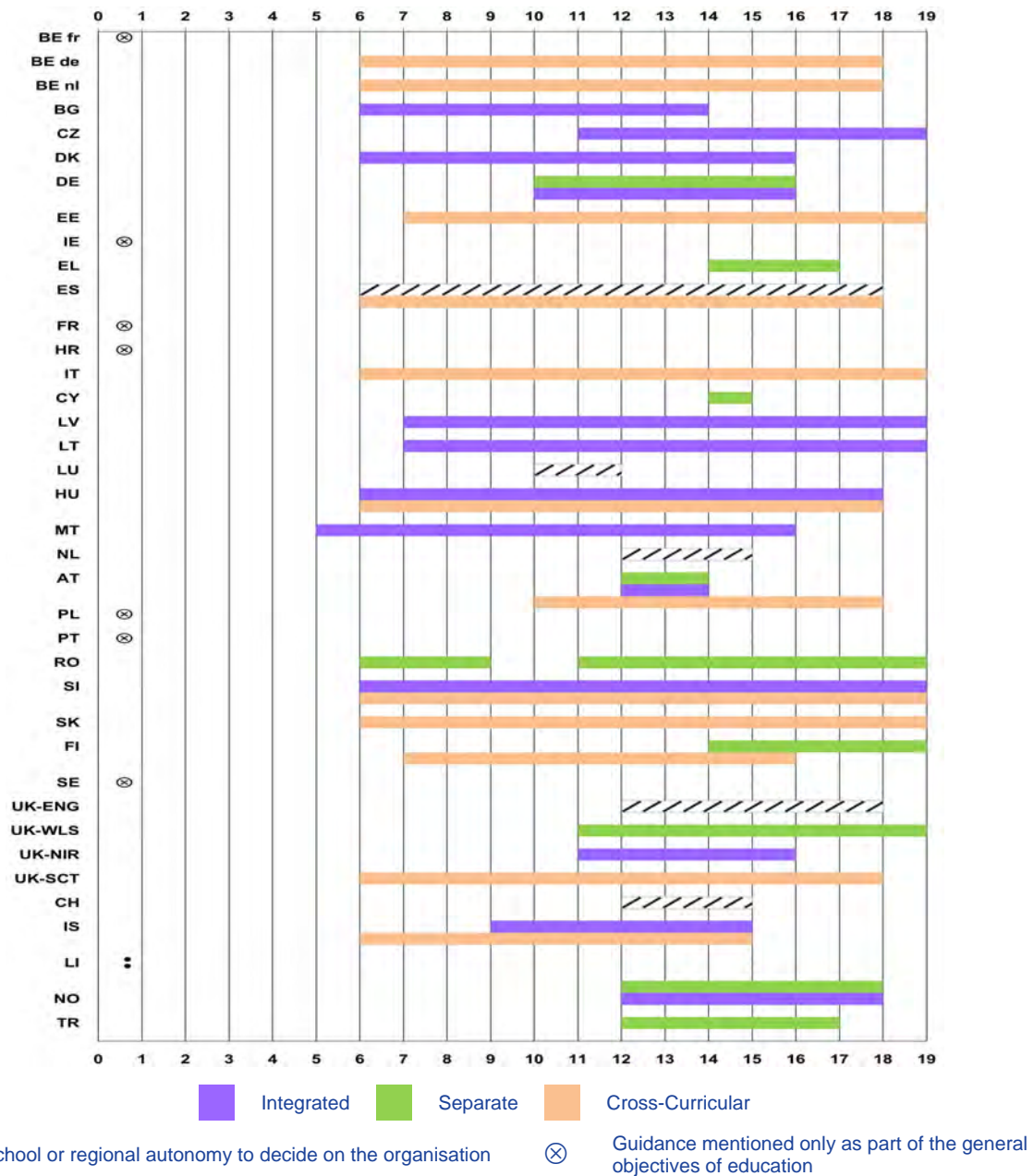
In **Germany**, at lower secondary level, an introduction to the world of work is a compulsory component of each course of education and is provided either as a separate subject such as *Arbeitslehre* (in pre-vocational studies) or as part of other subjects or subject areas. If *Arbeitslehre* is a separate subject, it can be either compulsory or optional, depending on the *Land*. Similarly, in **Austria**, career guidance (*Berufsorientierung*) is provided as a separate subject or is integrated into a group of subjects.

Additionally, optional stand-alone subjects or subject areas devoted to guidance (not indicated in Figure 5.4) can also be found in primary and/or secondary education depending on the school and the needs of students, as is the case, for instance, in Bulgaria, Estonia, Spain, Lithuania, Hungary, the Netherlands, Romania and Portugal.

In **Lithuania**, besides guidance taught as an integrated topic, a specific career module may be organised in secondary education in the form of a compulsory (and/or optional) course as part of cognitive, creative, artistic social and other types of activities.

⁽⁶⁾ The terms 'separate subject' and 'stand-alone subject' are used interchangeably in the text.

Figure 5.4: Education and career guidance taught as a compulsory topic, by age, according to top-level steering documents for primary and general secondary education, 2013/14



Explanatory note

Only compulsory teaching of education and career guidance is shown in this figure. The figure does not cover compulsory work experience in companies (see Section 5.2.3).

Country specific notes

Germany: Education and career guidance (*Berufsorientierungsprogramm*) is provided either as a compulsory or as a separate subject depending on the school type and the *Land*.

Spain: Schools, to some extent, are free to decide on the organisation of the topic following the guidelines expressed in top-level steering documents.

Croatia: According to the National Curriculum Framework (2010), education and career guidance is to be included in the curriculum. Although it has been adopted in law, this framework has not yet been implemented.

Malta: As from September 2014, Personal, Social and Career Development will be introduced as part of the core curriculum for all students in primary and secondary education.

Netherlands: In some schools, education and career guidance may be taught as an integrated topic. Schools are generally free to decide how the topic is delivered.

Austria: Education and career guidance is provided either as an integrated or as a separate subject depending on the school.

Switzerland: Each canton has its own regulations for education and career guidance in schools. In most cantons, it is taught as a compulsory integrated or cross-curricular topic at ISCED level 2.

The distinction between the separate subject and the integrated subject does not necessarily imply major differences in the objectives and content of education and career guidance (see Section 5.2.1). Some countries only highlight that it is important to complement the theoretical content by practical teaching and learning, which could be done through extra-curricular activities such as visiting exhibitions, excursions, and project-based learning linked to real life situations (see Section 5.2.3):

Hungary underlines that guidance can only be effective if implemented over a longer period of time and if it exploits the possibilities inherent in the various subjects, lessons and extra-curricular areas and activities in a concerted way.

Education and career guidance is sometimes a cross-curricular dimension of the curriculum. Where this occurs, it might be combined with the subject-based approaches previously mentioned. When the topic takes a cross-curricular dimension, all teachers must contribute to the implementation of the objectives as defined in the curricula. To some extent, education and career guidance has a cross-curricular dimension in all countries since they all include general objectives related to this topic in their curricula. In addition to these general objectives, the curricula of several countries emphasise education and career guidance in sections on cross-curricular themes, in key competences or within the learning content areas that apply to the whole teaching or learning process or to other aspects of school life. This is the case in most of the countries that have adopted a cross-curricular approach, but in others (e.g. in Spain and Italy), guidelines on education and career guidance are published in general steering documents or specific decrees/documents on guidance.

A dozen educational systems report that education and career guidance is a cross-curricular topic. In most cases, this applies throughout all three educational levels (Belgium (German-speaking and Flemish Community), Estonia, Spain, Italy, Hungary, Slovenia, Slovakia and the United Kingdom (Scotland)). In three other countries (Austria, Finland and Iceland), guidance is a cross-curricular topic at one or two levels of education.

A skill guide (2011) adopted by the **German-speaking Community of Belgium** is intended to prepare students to make informed career choices throughout primary and secondary education. According to the guide, schools are required to inform and advise students and their guardians about education, training and career options. Career guidance is part of school education and a crucial link between school and the world of work.

National Curricula in **Estonia** (2011) include the cross-curricular topic 'Lifelong Learning and Career Planning' which 'strives to shape students' readiness to find optimum use on the labour market, to make decisions independently, to fill different roles in life and to take part in lifelong learning'. Students are guided to value lifelong learning as a way of life and as a means to develop their career, they are encouraged to learn how to assess their skills, interests and knowledge in relation to work and study opportunities, and to apply this information in a continuous decision-making process'.

The **Hungarian** Core Curriculum (updated in 2012) describes career education as a cross-curricular topic to be built into all subjects throughout the school years. In accordance with students' age and abilities, schools must offer a comprehensive picture of the world of work. To achieve this objective, schools must provide activities which enable students to test their abilities, deepen their knowledge in the fields that interest them, choose a career that suits them and be able to work towards it. For this reason, good work-related behaviours such as cooperation, leadership and competition must be developed and managed.

In **Slovakia**, education and career guidance is included in the compulsory cross-curricular topic 'Personal and Social Development'.

In the **United Kingdom (Scotland)**, skills in 'personal learning planning and career management' are included in the main skills for learning, life and work embedded in the 'Curriculum for Excellence' (2009). It specifies that 'career management skills should be set within the establishment's wider approach to learning, skills development and personal development'.

5.2.3. Education and career guidance outside the classroom

Education and career guidance provided in the classroom may be complemented by activities outside lessons, for instance, in the form of extra-curricular activities. The analysis of the country reports shows that a wide range of guidance methods are used; the most valuable methods are those that involve students in interactive activities. The European Commission, too, highlights that guidance may be provided through interactive methods (mentoring, coaching, one-to-one guidance, and work placements) and through online services (European Commission, 2013a).

The ways of delivering guidance may be divided into individual and group methods. Many European countries put a special focus on group methods, as 'group guidance helps the link between the personal and the social in the decision-making process, besides ensuring wider access to services' (Cedefop, Sultana 2004, p. 44). Some of the group activities are organised at school level, while others need the assistance of others such as external guidance and counselling services. Schools run projects at class or school level, and sometimes have information sessions with guest-speakers such as guidance specialists or prospective employers (e.g. in Greece, Luxembourg, Malta, Slovenia and Iceland). They also set up workshops and seminars, during which students learn interview skills or how to write curriculum vitae (e.g. in Cyprus and Malta). The advantage of organising events at school level is that they take place close to students and also to their parents who may be invited.

Events outside school may include career fairs (e.g. Spain, Latvia, Malta, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovenia), open days in higher education institutions (e.g. Spain and Lithuania) and work places (e.g. Spain, Latvia, Hungary, Poland, Iceland and Norway). These events give students an opportunity to become acquainted with the external world of work and higher education.

Work experience or work placements in companies is a popular practice used in general education in a number of countries (e.g. Germany, Malta, the Netherland, Finland and Switzerland). These enable students to be introduced to the reality of the job market, to gain personal experiences of working life and different professions in an authentic environment. The European Commission highlights that experience of the workplace can motivate students to continue education and training and to become more focused on their future career choices and are therefore an important measure to prevent early leaving (European Commission, 2013).

In some countries, work experience takes place at specific points in students' education. In others, as for instance in Finland, it is a compulsory part of the curriculum.

In **Germany**, since 2008, the Federation has been promoting career guidance measures in inter-company and similar vocational education and training centres. The career guidance programme (*Berufsorientierungsprogramm*) of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research became permanent in 2010. The support is directed at students aspiring to a lower secondary school-leaving certificate as their highest qualification. It involves an assessment of students' potential (normally at the end of year 7), and workshop days (year 8). The assessment of students' potential seeks to establish their initial preferences and skills. During the workshop days, they then have the opportunity to learn about at least three vocational fields over a period of two weeks.

In **Malta**, year 10 students participate in an introduction to careers-scheme where students spend a week job shadowing in the workplace of their choice. During this week, they are visited by their guidance teacher and supervised by a mentor appointed by the place of work. They also keep a log of learning experiences and objectives at the workplace.

In **Finland**, the aim of work experience periods is to help students in their choice of further education or profession and to recognise the value of and appreciate the opportunities working life brings. Students should also have an opportunity to evaluate their learning and work experiences. Periods of work experience may be implemented as follows: 1-2 days of familiarisation with the work of school staff (year 7); 1-3 days outside school, for example, at a parent's work place (year 8); 10 days outside school, maximum 6 hours per day (year 9).

The most common individual guidance method reported by countries is one-to-one consultations or interviews. The advantage of this type of session is that it is customised to students' needs and they are confidential and impartial. Individual sessions may include psychological testing and creating competence portfolios (e.g. Germany and Luxembourg). In some cases, sessions of this nature are arranged for students prior to transition in order to provide them advice on future educational opportunities (e.g. 'Walk-in Service' in Malta – see National Information Sheet for more details).

In **Germany**, for example, systematic skills profiling procedures (e.g. competence analysis, career choice passport (*Berufswahlpass*), skills passport, competence portfolio, Profilpass, etc.) are used in all *Länder* on an occasional basis or across-the-board to provide individual support for students.

Furthermore, individual sessions are focused not only on education and career guidance but they also provide psychological counselling if required; they may provide time for discussions on learning and behavioural difficulties. Some countries consider additional support to students with learning difficulties as part of guidance procedures (see examples in Section 3.3). These are especially beneficial for those who may be at risk of early leaving. Sometimes other teachers or students' parents may be invited to attend the sessions.

The main drawback of individual interviews and consultations is the fact that not all students have access to them, they are limited to those who are specifically identified (for example, by school staff) as being in need of support, or to those students who contact guidance services on their own initiative. For this reason, some countries are increasingly turning to another individual guidance approach which is referred to as tutoring or coaching. The main principle of this method is a personalised approach for each student in the form of a continuous dialogue between the student and his/her tutor (either a teacher or a specialist). This method is mentioned in Spain, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. Additionally, Luxembourg is planning a reform of student tutoring:

In order to help students take academic and career decisions, a reform of secondary schools in **Luxembourg** provides for a system of personal tutoring during the first two years of lower secondary education. Students will be invited to reflect on their own skills, interests and objectives from the beginning of secondary education onwards. All pedagogical staff in contact with a student would be involved in the guidance process.

The provision of individual guidance online is finally becoming more popular. This is, for instance, the case in Luxembourg and the United Kingdom (England).

In the **United Kingdom (England)**, guidance provision can include web-based and telephone services and/or face-to-face guidance from a specialist provider. Young people can access career advice via a website or phone line.

5.3. School staff responsible for guidance

After having looked at the main objectives for guidance and the methods used to deliver it at school level, this section of the report focuses on the school staff responsible for delivering guidance within primary and general secondary education. Indeed, the availability of well-qualified staff for guidance work is a key factor in successful guidance provision in schools.

In order to ensure success in this area, the whole school community (including the school head, teachers and professional specialists) has a responsibility for providing guidance. Indeed, in the vast majority of countries, guidance provision is the task of a multi-disciplinary team consisting of different specialists. The involvement of various specialists guarantees a holistic and differentiated approach, which enables customised support for students not only in terms of education and career guidance, but also for those who require psychological support and counselling to overcome learning difficulties.

To ensure the availability of education and career guidance, schools clearly define the staff responsible for this provision. Figure 5.5 shows that a wide range of education staff deliver guidance

to students at primary and secondary level. However, when examining the types of staff involved, a distinction should be made between those who teach guidance in class and those who support students in school but are not classroom based. This largely depends on the status of guidance in the curriculum and the arrangements made to deliver it (see Section 5.2). Thus, if guidance is a compulsory part of the curriculum, it is provided by teachers in the classroom. When guidance is delivered outside the classroom, by in-school guidance services, mainly counsellors or teachers trained in guidance are involved.

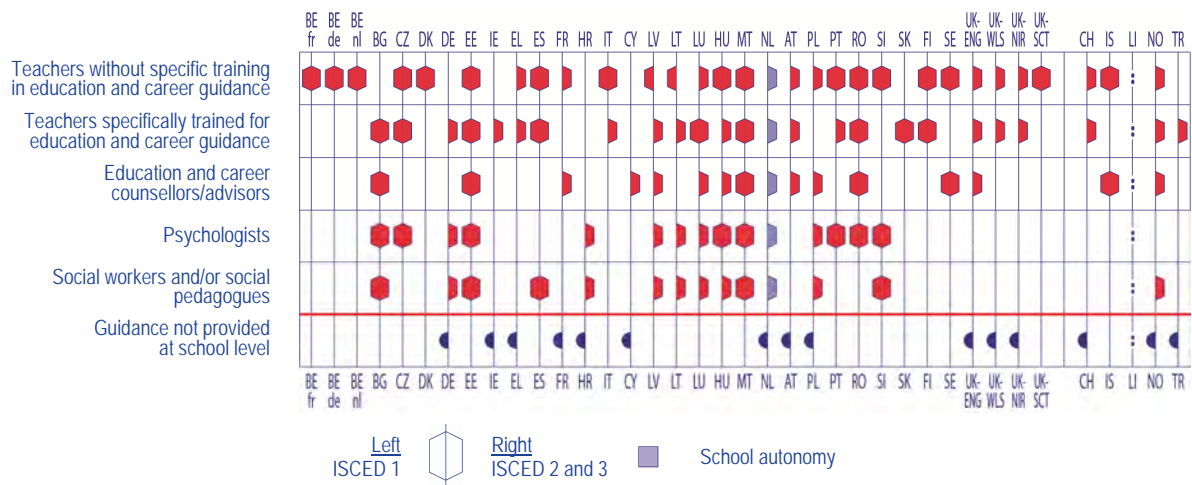
In addition to their duties described in Section 5.2.3, staff from the school guidance service may develop guidance plans and carry out surveys or field studies of the educational and vocational interests of students (e.g. in Slovenia). The school guidance service also collects, produces and distributes information to students and teachers on education and career opportunities. This may include printed and web-based information. Supporting teachers and school heads in guidance work, particularly in dealing with children with additional needs, is another important duty of the school guidance service (e.g. Luxembourg). Finally, school guidance service coordinates partnerships with external agencies such as counselling and welfare centres and public employment services (for more details on cross-government and cross-sector cooperation on ELET policies see Chapters 4 and 6).

The education and training of the staff responsible for guidance varies significantly between countries due to a wide range of university courses for teachers and guidance specialists. Nevertheless, some general similarities can be observed. For instance, most countries mention that all staff involved in guidance must have a university degree (Bachelor's or Master's) in order to access a position within a school. Moreover, all types of staff with some responsibility for providing guidance are offered CPD programmes to improve their skills. This applies to staff who are already qualified as well as to others such as non-specialist teachers who want to add guidance to their skills portfolio. Organising CPD programmes and courses for staff is usually the responsibility of external guidance services (see Section 5.4), but schools are often free to define their own CPD needs depending on student needs (e.g. in Belgium (Flemish Community) and Ireland). According to the TALIS survey (OECD, 2014, secondary analysis of TALIS data), around 42 % of European teachers have a high or moderate level of need for professional development in student career guidance and counselling. However, only 18 % of teachers who reported having recently ⁽⁷⁾ undertaken CPD said that it contained elements of guidance. A majority of these participants (around 82 %), said this training had had a moderate or large positive impact on their teaching practice.

Further examination of the types of staff involved in education and guidance (see Figure 5.5) reveals that teachers who are not specialised in guidance are responsible for this provision in around 30 systems at primary and/or secondary level. They play a significant part in it especially when the topic is part of the formal curriculum (see Figure 5.4). Where it is provided as a cross-curricular topic, all teachers are expected to be involved. This is underlined by Belgium (Flemish Community), Spain, Slovakia, the United Kingdom (Scotland) and Iceland. It is also true for the countries where guidance is not part of the compulsory curriculum but is integrated into the general objectives for education (e.g. Belgium (French Community), France and Sweden). Moreover, some countries (e.g. Bulgaria, Spain, Latvia, Malta, Slovakia and Slovenia) also give guidance responsibilities to teachers (class teachers/tutors) who are in charge of a group of students of a certain age.

⁽⁷⁾ The TALIS questionnaire refers to the CPD activities that have taken place 12 months prior to the survey.

Figure 5.5: School staff responsible for education and career guidance at primary (ISCED 1), general lower secondary (ISCED 2) and general upper secondary education (ISCED 3) levels, 2013/14



Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory note

The Figure covers only permanent school staff. It does not take into account specialists from external guidance services or guest speakers providing lectures at school.

Country specific notes

Croatia: Psychologists, social workers and/or pedagogues are responsible for delivering education and career guidance only at lower secondary level (ISCED 2). Education and career guidance is provided externally at upper secondary level (ISCED 3).

Hungary: Teachers specifically trained in guidance and education and career counsellors/advisors are responsible for delivering the topic only at upper secondary level (ISCED 3).

Malta: In primary schools, guidance is provided by teachers from secondary schools belonging to the same college.

Portugal: Each school cluster (usually comprising one secondary school, one or more basic education schools and kindergartens) have a school psychologist in charge of guidance.

Switzerland: Teachers without specific training and those specifically trained for education and career guidance are responsible for delivering the topic only at lower secondary level (ISCED 2). Education and career guidance is provided externally at upper secondary level (ISCED 3).

Iceland: Teachers without specific training in education and career guidance are responsible for delivering the topic only at upper secondary level (ISCED 3).

Teachers specially trained in guidance are responsible for provision in nine countries at primary level and in around two thirds of systems at secondary level. They generally teach guidance as a subject in the classroom (see Figure 5.4) but may also carry out the tasks of specialist guidance staff. Their initial qualification is in teaching but they have an additional qualification in guidance.

In the **Czech Republic**, guidance teachers (*výchovný poradce*) are qualified teachers who have completed a higher education course (at least 250 hours) to become a school advisor. This enables them to perform specialist guidance and counselling duties in schools.

In **Germany**, counselling teachers (*Beratungslehrer*) are members of the school staff with additional training in education sciences and psychology. Apart from providing guidance on the choice of school career, they also speak with students individually when learning or behavioural difficulties arise and maintain a general counselling service for students and teachers. A counselling teacher is also expected to share his/her experience and knowledge with school staff. A counselling teacher works closely with other bodies such as local youth welfare offices (*Jugendamt*).

In **Spain**, guidance counsellors (*orientadores*) are in charge of guidance in schools. They belong to the body of secondary education teachers, but are specialised in educational guidance. Their functions include providing support, counselling and guidance to students, to collaborate with schools and teachers in organising activities, tutoring and education and career guidance sessions. They are also responsible for the psycho-pedagogical assessment of students. Guidance counsellors must hold a Bachelor's degree (generally in pedagogy, psychology or psycho-pedagogy) and must also have undertaken an initial teacher education course (Master's degree).

In **Austria**, school or educational counsellors (*Schüler- bzw. Bildungsberater/innen*) provide information and individual counselling (at ISCED levels 2 and 3) for students and parents. Counsellors are teachers who provide guidance services in addition to their regular teaching activity which is slightly reduced. An initial training scheme (12 ECTS) is offered at university colleges of teacher education (*Pädagogische Hochschulen*), comprising counselling (providing information, handling problems, regular counselling), guidance for students with learning problems or personal development issues, and crisis management.

In **Finland**, as a rule, the common requirement for staff responsible for guidance (*opino-ohjaaja*) is a teacher qualification supplemented by counselling studies (60 ECTS).

Swiss universities offering teacher education programmes organise specific additional training in education and career guidance for lower secondary education (*Fachlehrerin/Fachlehrer Berufswahlunterricht/enseignant(e) spécialiste en information scolaire et professionnelle*)⁽⁸⁾. This training (20 ECTS) prepares teachers to support students in developing life and career skills and to support other school staff on guidance matters. Participants receive training in developmental psychology, sociological aspects of adolescence, reflection on role models, gender and immigration issues. They learn guidance methods, how to identify individuals or groups at risk, when to transfer students to other support and guidance professionals as well as gain in-depth knowledge of the apprenticeship and labour market. Participants develop skills for networking with external parties and gain practical experience of the labour market, quality assurance methods, etc.

Specialist counsellors or advisors are responsible for guidance in six countries or regions at primary level and 15 at secondary level. Usually, these specialists have an initial qualification in education and career guidance, which is offered in many countries at university level (e.g. the Nordic countries and Switzerland). Learning about guidance and counselling methods and tools is normally embedded in these programmes. University degrees in pedagogy, psychology, psycho-pedagogy, socio-pedagogy, social work, etc. also allow access to a position of a counsellor at school.

Guidance may also be provided by psychologists. These specialists are involved in guidance in eight countries at primary level and in almost twice as many at secondary level. They generally provide individual psychological support to children and their families. In most cases, they have a university degree in this field.

Guidance is provided by social workers or social pedagogues in five countries in primary education and in more than a dozen countries in general secondary education. Like psychologists, they normally also work on an individual basis with students and their families. Their role is generally to identify children with poor attendance and low levels of achievement, and to try to establish the reasons for this by contacting families and guaranteeing a return to school.

In addition to the types of staff shown in Figure 5.5, countries have mentioned youth workers (e.g. Bulgaria and Malta) and coordinators for extra-curricular activities (e.g. Luxembourg). Belgium (Flemish Community) added 'care coordinators':

A care coordinator is present in each primary school in **Belgium (Flemish Community)**. He/she supports teachers and students and is responsible for drawing up and implementing a care policy in the school. A care coordinator is also present in nearly all secondary schools, although unlike primary schools, secondary schools are not obliged to have them.

Teachers and specialists, such as guidance counsellors, psychologists, social and youth workers, have already been mentioned as the main professionals involved in supporting students at risk of leaving school early (see Figure 4.3). In fact, guidance specialists are responsible for both education and career guidance provision and also for tackling early leaving in slightly more than a dozen countries.

Since one of the target groups for guidance provision is young people at risk of early leaving, it is important to investigate how educational staff are trained to deal with this particular group. Around a

⁽⁸⁾ http://edudoc.ch/record/38151/files/ProfilBerufsw_d.pdf

third of European countries ⁽⁹⁾ report that the educational staff responsible for guidance receive training in the skills needed to deal with groups at risk of early leaving through their initial education. In other cases, staff receive additional training for this task through CPD programmes (e.g. the Czech Republic (teachers trained in guidance), Austria, Cyprus, Poland, Romania and Iceland).

University programmes which prepare specialists for dealing with disadvantaged groups and students at risk of leaving early differ even within countries. Some examples may, however, illustrate how these issues are integrated into initial education for those responsible for guidance. Spain also mentioned that specific course content on diversity, groups at risk of social or school exclusion are part of initial teacher education (Master's degree) for all secondary education teachers.

To receive a Degree of Bachelor of Arts in Study and Career Guidance, students in **Sweden** should be able to demonstrate the ability to cooperate with others to plan and develop support measures for people with special difficulties and needs in order to facilitate their entry to education programmes and the labour market.

In **Spain**, the branch in education and career guidance within the Master programme in teacher education (normally followed by prospective guidance counsellors) develops the skills needed through the subject content in modules such as 'Educational guidance and psycho-pedagogical counselling processes' or 'Inclusive education and attention to diversity'.

In **Germany**, the Standing Conference adapted the framework agreements on training and examination for the different types of teaching careers (2012) with a view to the requirements of inclusive education. The aim is to better prepare future teachers to deal with heterogeneity and inclusion and for the provision of additional support. Courses for teaching in special education at universities and equivalent higher education institutions are to be geared to the requirements of inclusive education in all types of school.

As shown previously in this report (see Chapters 2 and 3), children from a minority or migrant backgrounds are one of the groups at risk of leaving school early. Therefore, one of the measures that countries use to address this is encouraging the employment of educational staff from similar backgrounds. This is the case, for instance, in Bulgaria and Germany. Indeed, these education staff may help to liaise between schools, families and the migrant/minority community in general.

Some countries have reported about two main obstacles to the provision of high quality guidance at school level. The first one is the lack of specialist staff in schools as, for instance, in Bulgaria, Portugal, Romania and Turkey. The second obstacle is that the staff responsible for guidance do not always have sufficient training in this area, as, for instance, in Latvia and the United Kingdom (England).

In the case of **Latvia**, the recent changes in education legislation and school regulations mean that guidance staff should be available and trained in specific qualifications; however, the changes have yet to become institutionalised.

In the **United Kingdom (England)**, in 2013, 'Ofsted, the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills ⁽¹⁰⁾ looked at how schools were dealing with the responsibility to provide independent and impartial careers guidance. It highlighted that 'the information students received about careers was too narrow. Too many students were unaware of the wide range of occupations and careers that they might consider. About half the schools used their own staff to inform students about careers but these staff often had insufficient training and did not provide students with up-to-date information.'

In such circumstances, close cooperation between schools and external guidance services to provide support to students and CPD for teachers is especially important.

⁽⁹⁾ Bulgaria, the Czech Republic (for teachers not specifically trained in guidance), Germany, Spain, Italy, Cyprus, Malta, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden, Finland, Switzerland and Iceland.

⁽¹⁰⁾ <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/going-right-direction-careers-guidance-schools-september-2012>

5.4. External guidance providers: roles and activities

The responsibility of providing guidance is assigned not only to schools but also to external partners. These are mainly public guidance services but also public employment services, NGOs and private enterprises. Several different services may be invited to cooperate in terms of education and guidance provision within the same country. This enhances a cross-sector approach to guidance, which can ensure successful provision and therefore help tackle early leaving from education and training (see Chapter 4).

This section focuses on the responsibilities and activities of external guidance services in European countries which work in close cooperation with schools and other parties. Their duties are often wider than those of school services, and their role in the guidance process is essential, especially in countries where their employees are the main source of qualified guidance support available to students. This is, for instance, the case in Belgium (all communities) and in the youth centres in Denmark.

As with school guidance services, one of the main roles of external services is to provide individual and group support. In some cases, they provide general support for all matters related to education, psychology, pedagogy, etc., as is the case in Belgium, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Guidance services may also be responsible for organising extra-curricular activities (see Section 5.2.3). However, in other countries, these tasks are shared between the school and the external guidance services, as is the case in Belgium (Flemish Community) and Denmark.

In **Belgium (Flemish Community)**, guidance procedures are initiated by guidance services at the request of the school, parents or the student him/herself. Before starting the procedure, parents' consent must be sought for students under 12, and the student's consent if he/she is over 12. Guidance is compulsory in the case of truancy problems.

In **Denmark**, teachers are responsible for the provision of general careers education (years 1-9), but the youth guidance centres provide support, coordination, inspiration and further development in this area. Guidance specifically related to the transition from compulsory to upper secondary education is the responsibility of the youth guidance centres but it is provided in schools.

Providing training and support to teachers is another of the main tasks of guidance centres (e.g. in Belgium (Flemish Community), the Czech Republic, Greece, Luxembourg or Hungary). They organise seminars, workshops and CPD programmes to help teachers develop guidance skills. In Luxembourg, they also participate in the recruitment of the services' psycho-socio-educational staff.

In **Belgium (Flemish Community)**, guidance services offer support to teachers to strengthen school guidance provision, for instance by developing teachers' expertise in detecting problems at an early stage. They participate in school projects for priority target groups i.e. students at risk of dropping out due to their social background or living conditions.

External guidance services are also engaged in implementing programmes and other initiatives (e.g. Greece) and developing methods and content for guidance and information activities. In some countries, they help in planning and curriculum development for guidance, they then coordinate and evaluate the implementation of guidance activities delivered in schools.

In **Spain**, guidance services cooperate and participate in the drawing up of the school plans that include guidance and tutorial actions. In some communities, they also participate in the design, development and assessment of programmes for specific interventions, such as those related to ELET.

Guidance services are also responsible for developing information material and tools for students and teachers, including the production of brochures and presentations related to guidance (e.g. in Spain, Greece, Latvia and Luxembourg); they also create web-based tools (e.g. Ireland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Hungary and Switzerland).

The National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) in **Ireland** provides the School Guidance Handbook as an online resource to provide information and support for guidance provision. NCGE works in consultation with relevant experts to develop articles and guidelines for schools and to support students with different needs as well as the general school population.

Another common duty of guidance services is to assume the leading and coordinating role in partnerships between different parties. They contribute to establishing partnerships between schools and other stakeholders which inform and guide students (e.g. Luxembourg). Cooperation between different types of institutions and sectors with experience in guidance is encouraged in order to ensure a consistent approach to guidance, as well as the regular exchange of experiences, knowledge and best practice.

Youth centres in **Denmark** are obliged to cooperate closely with primary and lower secondary schools, local businesses and public employment services. In **Greece**, guidance and counselling centres (KESYP) establish cooperation with local authorities, media, career guidance organisations and higher education institutions. In **Latvia**, school heads, teachers, specialist staff, youth centres, public employment services, employers and NGOs are involved in the guidance process.

Finally, guidance services also coordinate and participate in long-standing initiatives on education and career guidance (see examples of Bulgaria, Germany, Cyprus, Lithuania and Luxembourg in Section 5.1 and the National Information Sheets).

5.5. Education and career guidance as a compensation measure to tackle ELET

After having examined education and career guidance as a prevention and intervention measure, this section looks at its role as a compensation measure, i.e. for students who have left school prematurely and wish to re-enter the education and training system to gain the qualifications they need.

The European Commission recognised guidance as one of its six priorities for lifelong learning as far back as 2001 (European Commission, 2001). It acknowledged that guidance should play a role both in facilitating access to learning and in motivating potential learners. Moreover, the Commission highlighted that guidance should be directed particularly at those individuals who are at risk of social exclusion. Furthermore, the Council underlined in 2004 that guidance can provide support to individuals who wish to re-enter formal education or training after having left school early ⁽¹¹⁾. Later, in 2011, the Council recommended targeted individual support to be included in compensation policies for early school leavers ⁽¹²⁾.

Regardless of whether guidance is being used as a prevention, intervention or compensation measure, the general objectives assigned to guidance are similar: it is intended to provide young people with support, information and opportunities to develop their skills (see Section 5.2.1). Countries underline that the major difference in the role of guidance with respect to compensation measures is that guidance directed at those who have already left education seeks to encourage them to return by giving a positive image of education, it capitalises on their individual skills and experiences, and shows their potential for further personal growth, notwithstanding previous failures. It is therefore important that guidance staff do more than just providing information about employment; they need to focus on the individuals themselves taking into consideration their particular needs and circumstances (Ecorys, 2012).

Education and career guidance is a key element in policies intended to reintegrate young people who have left school prematurely. Most European countries treat guidance as a compensation measure in

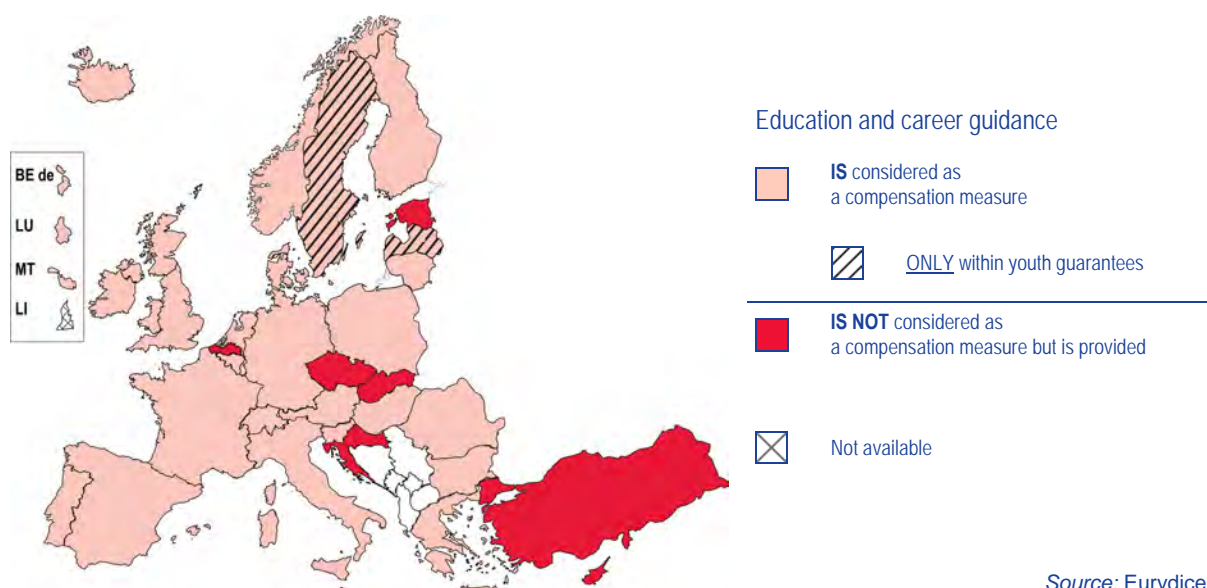
⁽¹¹⁾ Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the member States meeting within the Council on Strengthening the Policies, Systems and Practices of Guidance throughout life in Europe, 9286/04, 18.05.2004.

⁽¹²⁾ Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving, OJ C 191, 1.7.2011.

their early leaving strategies or policies (see Figure 5.6). In this report, guidance is considered as a compensation measure where it is embedded in second-chance education programmes, in adult education curricula, or as part of long-term or large-scale initiatives. Only Spain clearly states in its steering documents that one of the objectives of guidance is to provide support and advice to those who have already left education or training early without qualifications.

The 'Plan to Reduce ELET' (a part of **Spain's** comprehensive strategy on ELET), indicates the need to promote guidance and monitoring services for young people who have left the education system without qualifications. The aim of such services is to provide these young people with information about training and education opportunities and the paths to re-enter the education system. Within the existing strategy, regional education authorities are able to create guidance units for young people aged between 16 and 24 willing to re-enter the education system.

Figure 5.6: Education and career guidance as a compensation measure to tackle ELET, 2013/14



As highlighted in the research literature, once young people who have dropped out of education have been identified and contacted, they need the support of specialist professionals, including guidance specialists, to re-engage them in education or training (Ecorys, 2012). Several European countries (e.g. Belgium (French Community), Denmark, Luxembourg, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, the United Kingdom (Scotland) and Norway) assign this crucial role to specialist centres. The duties of these centres vary greatly between countries (for more details see the National Information Sheets). In some cases, these are specific services which have a number of duties such as identifying, contacting and providing initial advice to disengaged young people and guiding them to an education or training programme. This is the case in Denmark, Luxembourg, the United Kingdom (Scotland) and Norway. Additionally, Poland⁽¹³⁾ and Austria underline that the main target group of these types of centre is disadvantaged young people.

In **Denmark**, youth centres are obliged to make contact with young people under the age of 25 who have not completed a youth education programme and are outside the education system and the labour market. Together with the individual young person, the guidance counsellors discuss different opportunities and schemes that may help them get back into education, training or employment.

Moreover, guidance services and the guidance initiatives mentioned in Section 5.4, generally address their activities to a large target group, including not only those students who are enrolled in education but also those who have already left education without any qualifications. This is the case of youth

⁽¹³⁾ In Poland, the career centres within the framework of the Voluntary Labour Corps deal with disadvantaged young people.

centres in Denmark, guidance and counselling centres in Spain, Greece and Luxembourg, and 'Walk-in' services in Malta. These initiatives ensure that the centres provide a holistic approach to guidance and that 'young people have access to all the relevant information, advice and guidance at a single entry point', as recommended by the European Commission (European Commission 2013a, p. 21).

Re-entering mainstream education is another option that exists in several countries for early leavers to gain the qualifications they lack. The Council ⁽¹⁴⁾ underlines that a strong emphasis on guidance can bridge the gap between previous school failure and re-entering mainstream education. In Finland and Iceland, the return is based on an individual plan and/or personalised curriculum that is adapted to the student's needs and abilities. Drawing up the plan requires counselling and guidance.

In most European countries, existing youth guarantee schemes or those currently being developed (see Chapter 4.5) pay due attention to guidance provision. This is especially true for the countries where the youth guarantee scheme represents the main (if not the only) framework for guidance provision for the young people who have already left education early and would like to reintegrate. This is, for instance, the case in Latvia and Sweden where education and career guidance is an important action within youth guarantee programmes.

Young people who have left education early are also targeted by short-term guidance projects and initiatives. This is, for instance, the case in Bulgaria ('Chance to work', 'Increasing employment opportunities for unemployed people through quality training' and 'New Perspective'); and Lithuania ('Trust Yourself') (see National Information Sheets). Other projects mentioned in this chapter in relation to guidance at school also concern those who have left the education system (e.g. the project on systems of career guidance in Bulgaria – see National Information Sheets) ⁽¹⁵⁾. Furthermore, some decentralised countries, such as Spain and Italy, highlight the existence of a large number of regional and/or local initiatives.

Guidance methods used for compensation purposes are rather similar to those used at school level (see Section 5.2). They include careers classes, individual and group sessions but also interactive activities such as visits, and work experience in companies (e.g. Romania). The aim of all the activities is to enable young people to link the information received in classes and seminars with practical experience.

In **Finland**, career plans are addressed in youth workshops organised by associations and societies in cooperation with social services, education administrations as well as authorities for employment and the economy. These workshops are not a part of the formal education system. They include multi-professional guidance and provide an environment, where work and work-based training enable individuals to apply to education or seek a job. These workshops also teach everyday life skills, and they use the learning-by-doing method in their day-to-day activities.

Finally, as in case of prevention and intervention policies, all countries identify cross-sector cooperation in guidance provision for compensation purposes as a key success factor (see also Chapter 4 on cross-sector cooperation and multi-service partnerships). A large variety of agencies are encouraged to take part in providing guidance and counselling to those who wish to re-enter education and training. Public employment services play a significant role in many countries (e.g. Belgium (German-speaking Community), Italy and Norway), even where guidance is not viewed as having a compensatory role, as for, instance the Czech Republic. NGOs and private-sector organisations are also involved in some countries.

⁽¹⁴⁾ Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving, OJ C 191, 1.7.2011.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Other examples of initiatives launched in European countries with regards to guidance could be found in the Eurydice report on the responses of the EU countries to Europe 2020 Strategy (EACEA/Eurydice, 2013).

CHAPTER 6: EARLY LEAVING FROM VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The previous chapters of this report discuss the issue of early leaving from education and training (ELET) in general or focusing on general education. This section summarises findings of an on-going Cedefop study specifically looking at the phenomenon of early leaving from vocational education and training (ELVET) ⁽¹⁾.

The methodology combines:

- secondary analysis of the programme for the international assessment of adult competences (PIAAC) and adult education survey (AES) micro-data;
- primary data collection that covered eight countries (Belgium – both French and Flemish Communities, Denmark, Germany, France, Croatia, Italy, Austria and Portugal);
- desk research and literature review.

Understanding the role of vocational education and training (VET) in reducing early leaving implies analysing both the dropout phenomenon and the potential of VET to attract, retain and reintegrate young people in education and training. The rates of ELVET are often higher than the overall rate of ELET. However, it must be considered that in several countries students who face academic difficulties or failures are often oriented towards VET. Therefore, even when VET shows higher drop-out rates in comparison to general education this is not necessarily related to the quality of VET solely, but also to the selectiveness of education systems which tend to direct those who are at greater risk of early leaving towards VET. In addition, VET can be a key element of policies and measures to prevent or address early leaving.

This is why the potential of VET in preventing early leaving or as remedial measure is recognised in the European youth employment initiative ⁽²⁾ which encourages Member States to set up youth guarantee schemes ⁽³⁾ and allow all young people outside education, training or employment to start a new training programme (including apprenticeships), traineeship or being directly matched to existing vacancies. Early leavers or those at risk of early leaving should be a key target group for these interventions (see also Section 4.5 on youth guarantee schemes).

While many of the fundamental issues in relation to early leaving are similar in general education and VET, the scale of these issues can vary between the two sectors and there are also some challenges that are specific to vocational programmes.

6.1. Challenges of measuring early leaving from VET

6.1.1. Early leaving beyond the EU data

There is no common measure of ELVET currently available. The underlying data behind the EU indicator on ELET (see Section 1.2) does not enable an understanding of the type of programme from which young people left prematurely, whether this is from vocational education pathways or otherwise. In addition, the official EU data places young people in a variety of situations within the same broad category of 'early leavers', notably:

⁽¹⁾ See further details on Cedefop methodology in the introduction

⁽²⁾ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=1829>

⁽³⁾ Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee, OJ C 120, 26.4.2013.

- those who never started an upper-secondary education programme (non-starters);
- those who started a programme, but failed to complete it (drop-outs); and
- those who actually completed the programme, but failed the final assessment.

In an effort to better understand early leaving from education and training, European countries and regions employ a range of other approaches to data collection and monitoring in order to prevent and remedy early leaving. Through these national data collection tools, 15 countries out of the 36 European countries⁽⁴⁾ analysed collect data to enable them to make a distinction between educational tracks.

Comparing ELVET rates across these countries is, however, very difficult since definitions adopted by European countries and regions differ in a number of ways including their coverage of different programmes, fields of education, regions and attainment levels. Further, while the EU indicator limits early leavers to a particular age group (18 to 24 year olds), national definitions are typically not limited by age – with age coverage instead reflecting the national context with respect to participation in upper secondary education. The different indicators on ELVET available at national/regional level in Europe typically measure the incidence and rate of non-completion among the student population, and/or non-attainment among the student population or the resident population of the same age⁽⁵⁾.

There are two main alternative indicators used to understand ELVET across countries:

- across several European countries and regions **measures of the non-retention (or non-completion)** of students are used to provide information on the level and rate of ELVET. However, based on these measures it is not possible to distinguish drop-outs from cases of student mobility. This data is helpful to understand which programmes or VET providers face greatest difficulties regarding non-retention, but they do not reflect the real rate of early leaving. Belgium (French community), Croatia and Portugal are examples of countries with such data on VET. The available statistics in ELVET Denmark and Italy provide examples of approaches that measure the occurrence of drop-out by counting the **incidence of programme interruptions**;
- reflecting labour market concerns of having a qualified workforce, **indicators of non-attainment** of a certain qualification are adopted in many countries/regions. These capture the proportion of the student population (or in some cases, a specific age group) that has failed to obtain the relevant, formal VET certificate. This relevant certificate is defined at lower secondary VET or upper secondary VET levels. Belgium (French community), Germany and Austria are examples of this.

⁽⁴⁾ European countries considered in this study are the EU-28 Member States, Switzerland, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, and Turkey.

⁽⁵⁾ To the extent that administrative data does not include young people that have already left the education and training system, it will not fully represent the true rate of non-attainment among the resident youth population – that the EU indicator on ELET seeks to capture.

Figure 6.1: Summary of alternative indicators used to understand ELVET in selected countries

| Country | Definitions for alternative indicators of ELVET used | Treatment of student mobility |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| Indicators of non-completion | | |
| Belgium (BE fr) | Students who are not registered in education institutions of the French Community of Belgium in the year following enrolment are considered to have left the education system of the Community. | Many early leavers might have enrolled in other forms of training after dropping out or contract termination. |
| Denmark | The VET students who, based on longitudinal data, drop out of a programme, but who enrol in another programme ('re-selection') and the students who drop out of a programme but do not re-enter another programme ('no re-selection). | |
| Croatia | The proportion of students who passed a grade as compared to the proportion of students enrolled. Of these, it is possible to extract the number and proportion attributable to VET schools by field of education. | The school statistics have data on enrolment and completion rates for every grade, from which rates of non-retention can be calculated. |
| Italy | VET students who drop out from a programme during a given school year. | Those who drop out in between academic years are not captured, while it includes those switching training courses. |
| Portugal | Compares data on enrolment in a given grade with data on enrolment in a subsequent grade a year later. | This data does not differentiate between drop outs and repetition. Nor does it capture inflows/outflows during the year. |
| Indicators of non-attainment | | |
| Belgium (BE fr) | The number of young people who have not obtained the upper-secondary school certificate among all students in the last year of secondary education. | Independent on whether they pursue studies elsewhere or whether they discontinue education. |
| Germany | The share of leavers from general schools after compulsory schooling who have not attained the certificate of lower secondary education (<i>Hauptschulabschluss</i>) as compared to the resident population of the same age. | n/a – captures individuals that are least likely to start upper secondary education. |
| France | Young people, based on survey data, who have left initial education for more than one year (except for medical reasons, maternity, etc.) who are: (a) without a qualification; or (b) with only the lower secondary certificate (<i>Brevet des collèges</i>). | Does not count as ELVET those who obtained a qualification that continue to upper secondary education (e.g. <i>Bac professionnel</i>), but fail to obtain it. |
| Austria | Those who left the VET programme before having obtained the certificate of the final grade ('loss rate'). | This is, in effect, a gross loss rate, as it is independent of whether they pursue studies elsewhere or whether they discontinue education. |
| | Percentage of missed final exams in all final exams taken in a given year. | There is no information on the further educational career included. |
| | Students missing the minimum formal qualification (lower secondary school leaving certificate). | n/a – captures individuals that are not entitled to carry on to most educational tracks at upper secondary level. |

Source: Cedefop.

6.1.2. Early leaving from apprenticeships as a special case

The governance of many work-based VET programmes that lead to formal accreditation, such as apprenticeships, is different to that of school-based VET. Hence in many countries the data on school-based and work-based vocational programmes are collected independently, if at all. This is the case in apprenticeship systems, such as in Germany and Austria. These countries face a number of difficulties in crossing data from schools and apprenticeships data to enable a complete picture of learners' pathways and ELVET in particular.

An added complication stems from the inherent nature of work-based VET, which means that the decision to discontinue an apprenticeship can also be made by the employer for reasons wholly unrelated to the attainment or motivation of the individual learner. The data indicators are presented in terms of contract terminations rather than dropping out. However, the rate of contract termination is typically much higher than the real rate of early leaving as most young people start another apprenticeship contract or continue in another form of education and training. For example in Germany, while the contract termination rate for apprenticeships was 24.5 % in 2011 (BIBB, 2013), a survey of apprentices also carried out in 2011 (Beicht and Walden, 2013) shows that about 12 % of apprentices dropped out of their first apprenticeship training course without attaining the qualification within 36 months ⁽⁶⁾.

Indicators on early leaving from apprenticeships can therefore be seen as a special case. As well as the need for data linking (or full integration) to provide further information on education tracks, there is a need to monitor the multiple causes of contract dissolution or non-attainment in order to have a complete picture of the ELVET phenomenon.

6.1.3. Examples of data use to monitor early leaving from VET

Several countries have also developed approaches that enable monitoring of an individual trajectory from one educational track to another (e.g. Denmark, France and the Netherlands). This is considered an important step to be able to differentiate between those that leave the education and training system altogether and those that simply switch programme – information that can, in turn, be used to directly inform policy implementation.

In some countries (e.g. Belgium (French community), Denmark and France), the data collection systems are used not only at national level, but also at the level of individual training providers, those involved in remedial measures, local or regional authorities. This nominative data on specific individuals is used to carry out outreach and propose alternative education or training solutions.

6.1.4. Challenges of measuring early leaving from VET

The EU definition puts emphasis on the non-attainment of sufficient qualification (at international standard classification of education (ISCED) level 3a or 3b or 3c long), reflecting the labour market concerns of having a qualified workforce. However, several countries also use definitions that refer to the programme interruptions or the non-retention of students by measuring the occurrence of dropping out or non-completion rather than the qualification attainment (see Section 1.3 on national ELET definitions).

These alternative indicators are also linked to the different means of existing data collection. Several countries are using administrative data to identify who drops out and from where. A key challenge in this process is often the coordination of different datasets across several authorities each responsible for a different subsystem. Consequently, while it is possible to identify who drops out from school-based VET, the data does not enable to know whether these drop outs move to apprenticeships or leave education and training entirely.

⁽⁶⁾ The remaining apprentices who dropped out still achieved the qualification indicating that they changed employer in the meantime. Note though that those young people who changed programme orientation are still counted as drop outs in this survey (they are part of the 12 %), because they did not achieve the qualification they initially enrolled in (but they may have achieved a different qualification).

6.2. Data about early leaving from VET

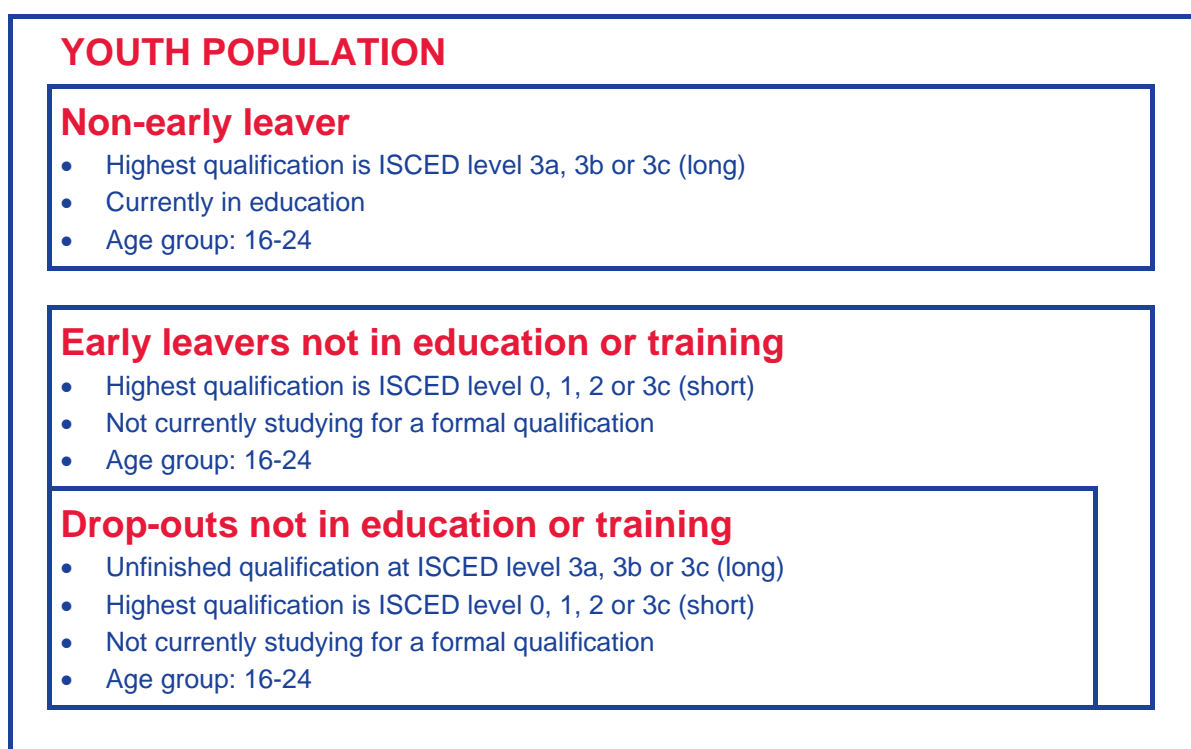
The national indicators and measurement challenges identified above suggest that there is considerable discrepancy between those that drop-out to change programme course or school, and those leaving education and training altogether. In light of this, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) PIAAC dataset is used to assess the extent to which:

- early leaving is an issue of those that discontinue an on-going course or fail the final examination, rather than those never starting an upper-secondary programme; and
- drop-out events are definitive, i.e. whether those dropping out return to education and training in future periods, and how often this occurs.

6.2.1. Developing alternative international indicators on the rate of early leaving and drop-out

The PIAAC 2012 dataset can be used to differentiate those that did not start upper secondary education from those that did not complete a programme. In this approach, the underpinning definition is in line with the approach of the EU ELET indicator as it makes use of information on unfinished upper secondary qualifications. An estimate of drop outs is hence calculated as a share of those early leavers who have started and failed to complete a programme at upper secondary level ⁽⁷⁾.

Figure 6.2: Drop-outs can be seen as a subset of early leavers within a given youth population ⁽⁸⁾



Source: Cedefop.

⁽⁷⁾ Upper secondary is defined in line with the EU indicator on ELET. As with the LFS dataset, it is not possible to distinguish between general- and vocational-oriented programmes.

⁽⁸⁾ The extended age category including 16 to 29 year olds is used in later analysis in order to increase the sample size and thereby the reliability of the reported point estimates.

The operational definitions used in calculating rates of early leaving identified within PIAAC differ from the EU measure of ELET based on the labour force survey (LFS) in three ways:

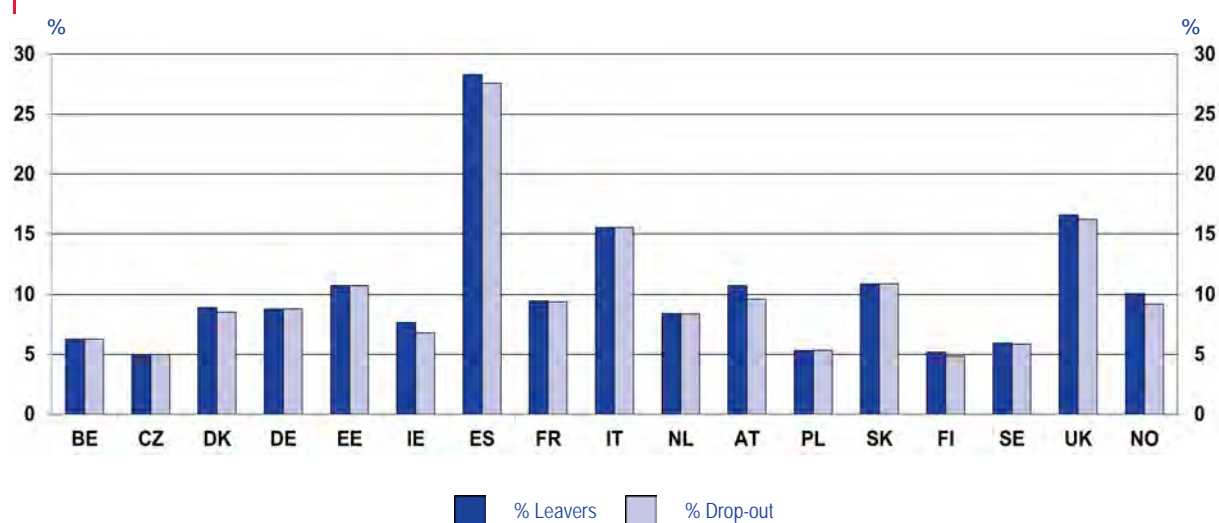
- the age group 16 to 24 (instead of 18 to 24) is included in the PIAAC measure;
- only formal qualification is counted as current participation in education or training; and
- the PIAAC survey has been conducted in only 17 European countries ⁽⁹⁾.

The approach to measurement of the current level of education attainment is however identical and, what is more important, the patterns of early leaving are broadly consistent across the 17 countries included in both the EU-LFS and PIAAC ⁽¹⁰⁾.

This analysis shows that early leaving is primarily a drop-out phenomenon and not starting upper secondary education and training is not really common.

On average, about 10 % of 16 to 29 year olds surveyed are classified as early leavers. Of these, the vast majority (97.5 %) can also be classified as drop-outs. This suggests that only 2.5 % of the young population of early leavers in Europe did not start an upper secondary programme. In all of the EU-17 and European economic area (EEA) countries surveyed, the estimated rates of drop-out are not statistically different from the rates of early leaving ⁽⁰⁾.

Figure 6.3: Early leaving and drop-out rates among young people (16-29), 2012



| | BE | CZ | DK | DE | EE | IE | ES | FR | IT | NL | AT | PL | SK | FI | SE | UK | NO |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|-------|------|-------|------|-------|------|-------|------|-------|------|------|-------|-------|
| % Leavers16-29 | 6.26 | 4.98 | 8.89 | 8.79 | 10.73 | 7.65 | 28.28 | 9.45 | 15.53 | 8.43 | 10.74 | 5.34 | 10.90 | 5.19 | 5.92 | 16.58 | 10.06 |
| % Drop-out16-29 | 6.26 | 4.98 | 8.53 | 8.79 | 10.73 | 6.81 | 27.57 | 9.40 | 15.53 | 8.35 | 9.61 | 5.34 | 10.90 | 4.85 | 5.84 | 16.21 | 9.21 |

Source: Cedefop calculation, based on OECD, PIAAC.

Further analysis of the dataset shows that VET can make the difference in the event of drop-out.

Based on PIAAC data, about 30 % of the young people who have unfinished qualifications at upper secondary level from 2002 to 2011 would not be classified as early leavers because they either:

⁽⁹⁾ The PIAAC survey was conducted in 33 countries by the OECD in the period 2008-2013. The database following phase 1 contains information on 22 countries, including EU-16 Member States and Norway, as well as five countries outside Europe. In phase 2 (2014-2018), the PIAAC survey will be extended to include four other European countries: Greece, Lithuania, Slovenia and Turkey.

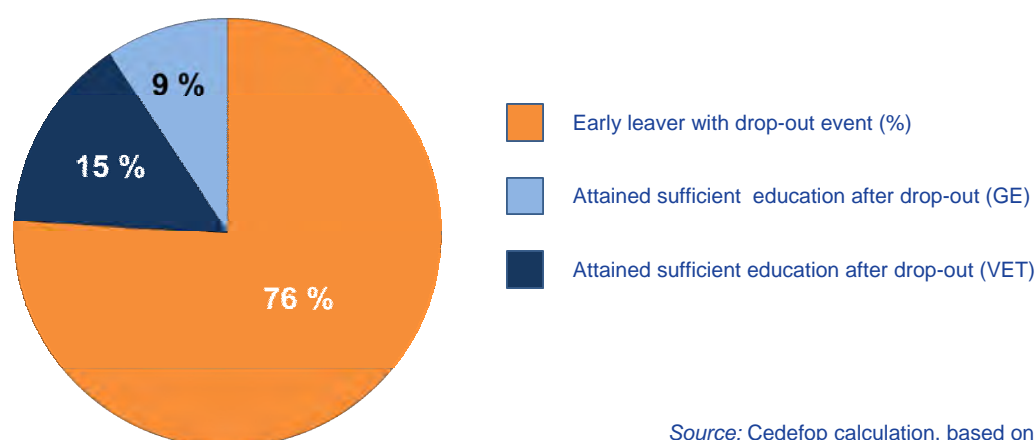
⁽¹⁰⁾ There is a positive correlation (0.83) and positive Spearman's rank correlation (0.60) across the two indicators.

- had already attained an upper secondary qualification before dropping out from a further upper secondary study (12.6 %); or
- subsequently to dropping out went on to attain an upper secondary qualification (16.3 %) ⁽¹¹⁾.

This suggests a certain degree of permeability of educational pathways, with opportunities to return and continue education in the event of uncompleted qualifications.

Roughly one in four (24 %) young persons who dropped out of a programme went on to achieve sufficient educational attainment (upper-secondary qualification) ⁽¹²⁾. Of these, 62 % (15 % out of 24 %) achieved an upper secondary qualification through VET, while having dropped out at one point in time.

Figure 6.4: Young drop-outs who went on to achieve a sufficient educational attainment, 2012 (%)



Source: Cedefop calculation, based on OECD, PIAAC.

Explanatory note

Data is presented for 2002-2009. Sufficient education attainment is defined as at least ISCED 1997 level 3a, 3b or 3c (long).

This finding underlines the view that VET can play a key role in facilitating alternative pathways and re-entry into education and training. Alternative measures of 'drop-out' can therefore provide a different metric to the standard EU measure of ELET. However, the data presented from PIAAC does not provide information on the orientation of programmes from which drop-out occurs.

6.2.2. National data on rate of early leaving from VET

Comparing rates of early leaving between VET and general education

In a number of European countries and regions, irrespective of the definitions and data collection methods used, it is often observed that the rates of early leaving from VET are higher than the overall rate of ELET.

In **Belgium (French Community)**, for example, the share of young people who did not obtain an upper secondary school certificate among all students in the last year of secondary education was 26.6 % in 2011 for vocational-oriented programmes, compared to 14.2 % for general upper secondary education.

⁽¹¹⁾ For the purpose of analysis, it is assumed that those achieving upper secondary education in the same year as their reported unfinished qualification did so afterwards. This is the case for 86 (32 %) of the 265 observations.

⁽¹²⁾ The first measure – 30 % – is based on a group that also contains those young people who never started upper-secondary education (denominator). Hence the difference from the second measure – 24 % – which is only looking at the share of those who dropped out of upper secondary education programme, but at the same time hold a qualification at this level (denominator).

In **Denmark**, the ELVET rate in 2012 is reported at 48 % – largely due to many VET students' reselection of subjects during the foundation course. Based on interviews with academic experts and ministry officials, if only those drop-outs that have left the educational system (without reselection) are included, this figure is estimated to be approximately 30 %. This rate, however, remains considerably higher than the rates of early leaving attributable to general education pathways (13 % in 2012).

In **Austria**, a greater proportion of students drop out from VET schools (36 %) and VET colleges (27 %) to change educational track or programme than do students in general education (16 %). The true rate of drop-out – i.e. those who quit their educational career during upper secondary education – is estimated to be higher in VET schools (13 %) than it is in general education and VET colleges (7 %).

In **Portugal**, in contrast, rates of non-retention of students are consistently higher for general education courses than in VET in each of the three years of upper secondary education.

Rates of early leaving by educational stream and field of education

As well as variation across VET and general education programmes, there is evidence of significant differences of early leaving by educational stream and field of education.

In the **Netherlands**, for example, levels of ELET vary significantly in each educational 'stream'. For those students undertaking vocational secondary education, students in the first level of both work-based and school-based VET have much higher rates of ELET than average (45 % and 34 % respectively in 2011/12). The rate remains high for students and trainees undertaking short level 2 courses (12-13 %), although for students studying upper secondary level 3 and level 4 VET courses, the rate of ELET is much lower (4-5 %) – indicating that those studying up to a higher level of VET are more likely to complete their studies. These rates compare to just 0.6 % of early leaving across all general secondary education ⁽¹³⁾.

In **Germany**, the rates of final apprenticeship exam success and also the rates of contract dissolution differ across sectors. In 2011, higher than average rates of exam success and lower rates of contract dissolution were recorded in public administration compared to other sectors.

In **Croatia**, rates of non-retention are highest in VET courses related to internal affairs and security (10 %), shipbuilding (7 %), textiles and veterinary science (6 %). In health, air transport, optics, and economy, non-retention rates are instead below the national average (<3 %).

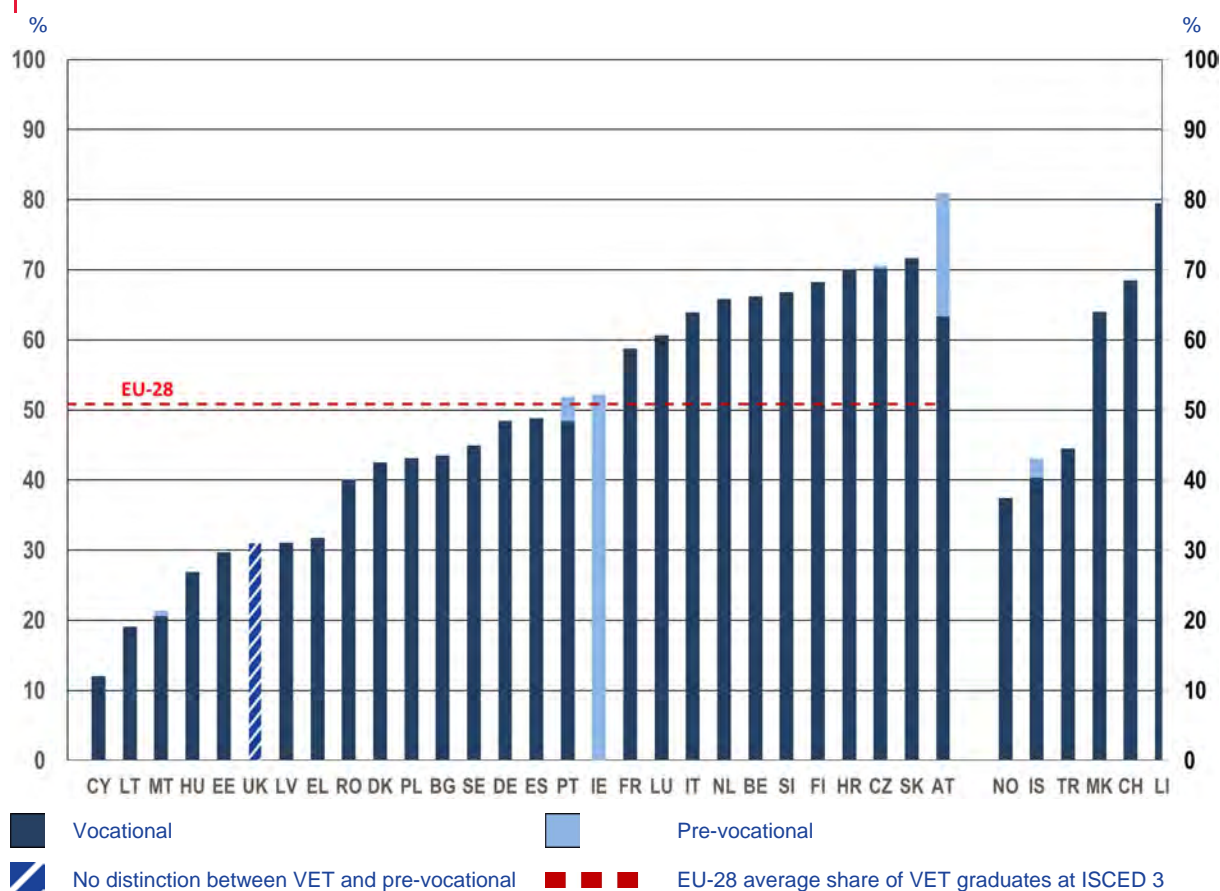
The role of VET in reducing early leaving

The role of VET in reducing early leaving from education and training is not only related to the reduction of dropping out from VET, but also to the potential of VET to attract, retain and reintegrate young people in education and training.

Levels of enrolment in vocational pathways of upper secondary education and the attainment of upper secondary qualifications through VET differ markedly across European countries and regions (see Figure 6.5.). In 20 out of 28 Member States, more than 40 % of graduates were from VET programmes at upper secondary level, and on average more than one in two upper secondary graduates followed pre-vocational or vocational-oriented programmes in Europe. In terms of engaging young people in upper secondary education, on average, VET also accounts for 50 % of enrolments in programmes at upper secondary level in the EU-28. The countries where a high proportion of upper secondary graduates come from VET tend to also be those that have relatively high levels of enrolment in VET.

⁽¹³⁾ Note that this estimate of early leaving from all general secondary education includes lower secondary, as well as upper secondary general education.

Figure 6.5: Graduates in upper secondary VET as a share of all graduates from upper secondary education ⁽¹⁴⁾, 2012



Source: Cedefop calculations on the basis of Unesco/OECD/Eurostat (UOE) ⁽¹⁵⁾ data [educ_grad2].

Explanatory note

2011 data is used for Ireland, Liechtenstein and Turkey and 2010 data is used for Iceland. Data by programme orientation not available for the United Kingdom, for which presented values include graduates from post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED 4) based on DG EAC calculations (European Commission, 2013).

In Figure 6.6 countries have been clustered according to share of VET students ⁽¹⁶⁾ and level of early leaving according to the EU ELET indicator. This clustering shows that:

- 8 in 10 countries that have high participation in VET have rates of ELET below the EU 10 % target; and
- 10 out of the 12 countries classified as having a low participation in VET have above average rate of ELET.

⁽¹⁴⁾ Upper secondary VET is defined as ISCED 1997 level 3 courses with a pre-vocational, pre-technical, vocational or technical programme orientation.

⁽¹⁵⁾ The results of the UOE data collection on education statistics are compiled on the basis of national administrative sources, reported by ministries of education or national statistical offices. Countries provide data, coming from administrative records, on the basis of commonly agreed definitions.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Role of VET is measured here by enrolment in VET as share of all students in upper secondary education (%). A relatively high share is statistically determined as greater than 65 % of students enrolled in VET-oriented programmes at upper secondary level. A relatively low share, in contrast, is less than 44 %.

Figure 6.6: Cluster analysis of the role of VET in avoiding ELET

| | Below 10 % ELET | Above 10 % ELET |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| High share of VET students (>65 %) | CZ, HR, NL, AT, SI, SK, FI, CH | BE, LU |
| Mid share of VET students (44-65 %) | DK, PL, SE | BG, DE, ES, FR, IT, RO, MK, NO |
| Low share of VET students (<44 %) | IE, LT | EE, EL, CY, HU, LV, MT, PT, UK, IS, TR |

Source: Cedefop (Eurostat data).

This may indicate that **countries with a relatively weak VET system are more likely to have a greater challenge of early leaving**. This finding should however be interpreted with some caution as there are a number of individual, labour market and organisational factors associated with early leaving. There are also some unavoidable issues of data consistency ⁽¹⁷⁾.

6.3. Factors influencing early leaving from VET

6.3.1. Factors related to the individual and family background – specificities of VET

Section 2.1 discusses how the following characteristics of the individual are associated with increased chances of dropping out prematurely:

- low socio-economic background and in particular poverty, domestic violence, parents' physical and mental health issues or parents' with no or very low qualifications;
- migrant background or ethnic minority background, especially when associated with low education levels of parents;
- male gender especially when associated with low level of education of parents and ethnic minority background.

These factors obviously also influence early leaving from VET. However, some additional remarks can be made when looking at dropping out from VET.

Gender

As shown in Section 6.2, in several countries the rates of early-leaving from VET are higher than the rates of early leaving from general education, even though there are variations according to types of programmes. In this context, it should also be noted that overall young men are more likely to enrol in vocational programmes than young women. In a number of countries the enrolment of young men in VET is more than 10 % points higher than that of young women (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Greece, France, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Austria, Poland, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia). This trend can be found both in countries with high participation in VET as well as those with low participation in VET, even though in the latter the differences are proportionally even greater.

However, when looking only at VET specifically, it is not systematically the case that young men leave without a qualification more frequently than young women. In fact, the extent to which gender affects the dropping out, in particular in apprenticeships, seems to be related to the extent to which the profession is male or female dominated.

⁽¹⁷⁾ The ELET indicator, on the one hand, measures the share of early leaving out of the youth population (18-24), while the available UOE data indicators on enrolment and graduation instead consider the student population, irrespective of age.

For instance, data about the **German** apprenticeship system shows that women have higher apprenticeship contract-termination rates in male-dominated professions than in other sectors (BIBB, 2013). While apprenticeship contract termination is not equivalent to early leaving as many continue in a different apprenticeship, the data shows that there is a clear gender-bias in apprenticeship retention depending on whether the profession is particularly gendered.

Seemingly, the **United Kingdom** data on apprenticeships shows that completion rates are higher for female in apprenticeships that correspond to the European qualifications framework level 2 while gender is no longer a significant factor for apprenticeships leading to qualifications at higher level (Hogarth et al., 2009).

Migrant or ethnic minority background

The situation of students with migrant or ethnic minority background and VET is complex. However, in nearly all the countries reviewed below, their dropout rates in VET are higher for the group with migrant or ethnic minority (namely Roma) background than for other students (see Figure 6.7). At the same time, in several countries (Belgium (French and Flemish Communities), the Czech Republic, Hungary and the Netherlands), migrants and minority students tend to be over-represented in those VET programmes that face higher drop-out rates in general. In others, they are under-represented in those types of VET programmes that have good retention rates (Germany and Austria).

Figure 6.7: Participation of (non-western) migrant (and ethnic minority) students in VET in selected countries and their chances to drop out

| Country | Migrants participation in VET | Status of VET | Migrant drop outs from VET |
|------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Belgium | Over-represented (both French and Flemish Communities) (school-based) | Low – often a second choice pathway | In the French Community, migrants have better success rate than nationals contrary to the Flemish Community |
| Czech Republic (Roma) | Over-represented in VET programmes at lowest level (school-based) | The lower level programmes have low status | Higher than other ethnic minorities |
| Denmark | Under-represented (apprenticeships) | Good | Higher than those of Danish origins |
| Germany | Under-represented (apprenticeships) | Good | Higher than those of German origin |
| France | Over-represented in School-based VET Under-represented in apprenticeships | Varies between social groups | Higher dropout rates from school-based VET than those of French origin |
| Hungary (Roma) | Over-represented (school-based VET) | Low – low participation overall | Likely to be higher (VET where Roma are over-represented has highest dropout rates) |
| Netherlands | Over-represented in VET programmes at lower levels Under-represented in apprenticeships | Varies between social groups | Higher |
| Austria | Under-represented in particular in VET colleges | Good – both when it comes to apprenticeships and school-based VET | Higher than natives |

Source: For the following countries: Belgium, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and Austria, adapted from Dag Tjaden, 2013, for France, Brinbaum and Guegnard, 2011, for Hungary, Open Society Institute (2007), for the Czech Republic, GAC, 2010.

The reasons why young people with migrant or ethnic minority background are more likely to drop out from VET are numerous and complex. The issues of prior academic achievement or failure, often linked to the level of language skills already in basic education are some of the factors that explain this phenomenon. Another one being families' material deprivation or poverty. In addition to these already rather well known factors, the interviews carried out for the Cedefop study also pointed towards specific issues such as:

- families' expectation that the young person will work in the family small business;
- in some communities, there is a strong feeling of identification with a territory (a specific suburb or part of the city) where there may be no VET training centre or VET school;
- lack of parents' engagement in their children's education due to parents' poor understanding of the education system and of the opportunities available.

However, interviews carried out within the Cedefop study do not systematically confirm a relationship between dropping out and migration background.

6.3.2. Factors related to the organisation of VET

During the interviews carried out for this study interviewees in particular emphasised the issues inherent to the education and training system and institutions to explain early leaving from VET. Although interviewees also mentioned a range of other issues ⁽¹⁸⁾, this section focuses only on issues that are quite specific or strongly present in VET.

Students' orientation

Numerous interviewees discussed issues related to students' inadequate orientation as one of the reason for dropping out. This issue is not exclusively specific to VET, but it is in particular pronounced in VET as there are many more choices possible in terms of type of programme. There are several facets of this issue cited by the interviewees:

- students and their families prefer to try to complete a general education programme first. In case the young person faces important difficulties, they drop out from general education and enrol in VET. This transition does not necessarily mean that they will again drop out from VET and finish as early leavers. However, disengagement and stigmatisation that result from the first premature termination of a programme may have negative consequences for the rest of their development;
- negative choice of a VET programme. Many interviewees note that the fact that a young person is told to attend a certain programme because they are 'not good enough' for other programmes is detrimental for their future continuation. These young people often already have negative self-image, in particular in association with education due to their previous scholar difficulties;
- lack of any future vision of their pathway. Most young people at the age of 15 or 16 do not have a concrete professional project. However, what they often lack is a reflection on their future pathway and a self-reflection on their aspirations. This rather passive and disengaged attitude to their education is a key difficulty faced by many students in VET who are told to follow a certain path rather than being engaged in an active choice.

⁽¹⁸⁾ Such as: the positive importance of the feeling of belonging to a group in a classroom or a company; the influential role of families in engagement in young persons' education and training; the significance of teacher-student relationship; and other aspects of behaviours and relationships in education institutions that affect young people's self-perception and aspirations.

In this context, several interviewees noted the possible positive role of pre-vocational training or initiatives where young people can try out various professional activities before they choose a specific programme. The fact that these types of programmes are being downscaled (e.g. in France), less popular (Austria) or that the entry year to VET is no longer organised in this 'exploratory manner' (Belgium (French Community)) was also seen by some as being associated with early leaving.

Perception of the profession

Another point linked to the orientation of students is the mismatch between perception of the profession they study for and its reality. This appears to be more common in some programmes or fields of study than others. It does not yet mean that the young person will end up as early leaver, s/he may well enrol in another programme that better matches his/her needs. However, it is important that this re-orientation takes place rapidly, before the young person becomes disengaged.

These misperceptions can be linked to several issues:

- lack of awareness of the working conditions and low readiness for these;
- underestimation of the level of technical complexity of certain professions which require solid knowledge basis in areas such as mathematics, physics or science;
- lack of understanding of what kind of jobs a given programme leads to.

The negative image of VET more generally

In everyday language of parents or teachers there is a lot of negative judgements and expressions about VET. Hence when young people enrol in VET they interiorise the idea that they are 'not good enough' and this is one of the causes of disengagement from education.

Interestingly, this issue was mentioned across all countries where interviews have been carried out, including Denmark, Germany or Austria which are internationally considered as having high quality and attractive VET. This creates a certain vicious circle. Students who face more substantial academic difficulties are often in higher concentration in certain VET programmes or fields of study (those that have low attractiveness) and they are more likely to disengage (or continue disengaging).

Programme content and organisation

Interviewees note that when young people choose a vocational programme they wish to pursue a learning that is more practical and concrete. Instead, it was noted that a number of VET programmes are structured in a way in which they need to engage in a substantial amount of theory before getting to experience the practice. A number of interviewees reflected on the need to make sure that theoretical knowledge should be integrated into the vocational context and meaningful for young people in the context of the profession they are preparing for. Directly or indirectly, the interviewees called for more competence-based training as a way:

- to recognise achievements that are perceived as meaningful also by the young person; and
- to combine the teaching of knowledge, skills and competence in coordination.

There is an expectation that VET can more easily adopt this approach (or is already doing so) while at the same time the reality on the ground is still often lagging behind this ideal.

Development of a professional identity and the meaningful character of training

VET has another characteristic, mentioned by interviewees that can constitute an asset in combating early leaving. Good quality VET can lead to the development of a professional identity. This requires an engaging and motivating process which enables young people to perceive the training as meaningful. Through 'role models' who are the trainers or VET teachers, young people gain an idea of the profession and incorporate its codes. They get to practice, ideally in a work-place, and these helps creating this professional identity.

Specific issues related to apprenticeships or other forms of programmes with strong in-company training

Interviewees also mentioned a number of issues that were more specifically related to apprenticeships or programmes with required substantial periods of work-based learning:

- *availability of work-based learning opportunities.* In many systems, the lack of apprenticeship places is not considered as a reason for dropping out as such, but it is still frequently mentioned in this context. In these countries the apprentice cannot enrol in an apprenticeship without having a contract with an employer (e.g. Belgium (French Community), France and Austria). However, interviewees in these countries nevertheless commented on the difficulty of finding a placement for young people;
- *readiness to work.* In an apprenticeship or traineeship, young people have to become from one day to another adults at the age of 15 to 16. They have to adopt the rules of the workplace and obey with certain basic norms related to behaviours and skills such as punctuality, discipline, communication, compliance with rules and requests. Many interviewees commented on the lack of readiness to work as a key reason for not finding an apprenticeship or dropping out in early months. Employers expect apprentices to demonstrate motivation and commitment and when this is lacking they terminate the contract. They may also be in client-facing situations and capable to handle different types of contacts, this may require a degree of maturity and self-control that they often don't possess at entry;
- *relationships on the workplace.* Finding a welcoming and supportive environment in the workplace is key for young people's retention. Interviewees note that when the relationship with the mentor or the trainer is not good, young people are much more likely not to complete the programme. This is linked on the one hand to the issue of work-readiness as said above, but on the other hand it was also mentioned that in some sectors (e.g. catering), the working conditions and the working atmosphere are in general rather 'rough';
- *motivational role of work-based learning (positive factor).* On the other hand, work-based learning has a strong potential to support retention of young people. Several interviewees commented on the motivational potential of work-based learning. On one hand being engaged in a real working process enables young people to construct a meaningful vision of their learning and future. On the other hand, positive working relationships, the valorisation of their work by other employees can be very motivating and contribute to positive self-perception.

6.3.3. Factors related to the labour market

Not all the reasons for dropping out from VET can be linked to the young person himself/ herself or to the nature of the education system or the institution. There are a number of external factors that also act as push or pull factors.

Attraction of the labour market (better pay)

Finding a job is often cited as a reason for dropping out. Some interviewees noted that young people in their final year of study are particularly attractive for employers. They are relatively well qualified already (though they do not have the formal certificate) and they are cheaper than qualified workers as they are employed as unqualified labour force. The possibility for these young people to still pass the final certification even if they do not finalise the whole training programme was emphasised by a few interviewees as option for these young people.

Labour market regulations

Although only a small number of interviewees commented on this aspect, some differences depending on the level of regulation of the labour market were mentioned. In countries and sectors where having a formal qualification is not a requirement for entering a profession, young people may be less inclined to complete a training programme. On the other end, in those countries where a qualification is a requirement to enter a profession, it was also noted that in some sectors where the work can be quite quickly mastered and companies do not always require all the skills certified by a qualification there is a tendency to extensively use apprentices to avoid hiring personnel. These are also sectors that have high levels of drop out from apprenticeships.

Working conditions

The working conditions of certain sectors were mentioned as a potential push factor for dropping out. Young people realise that in certain sectors (e.g. confectionery, chefs, waiters, retail, masonry) they have to work long hours, often weekends and the physical conditions or levels of pressure and stress are important. In the sector of tourism, many jobs know important seasonal variations. These issues discourage them from pursuing the training.

Overall economic context

Several interviewees noted that the overall depressed economic context was demotivating for young people to complete their studies. At the same time, the economic context is also negatively affecting the take up of young people into apprenticeships in a number of countries. Taking on apprentice constitutes a commitment of three to four years to a workplace. However, it was noted that especially in micro-enterprises employers were increasingly hesitant to make such commitments.

6.4. The role of VET policies

The measures analysed in this chapter are either ELVET specific measures or they rely on traditional VET pedagogies as means of reducing early leaving. Thus, measures that may have an indirect impact on ELVET but were not specifically developed to tackle early leaving from VET have not been considered (see Chapter 3 on policies and measures for tackling ELET in general education).

6.4.1. The role of VET in comprehensive ELET strategies

To date, four countries have set up a comprehensive strategy for tackling early leaving from education and training (Belgium (Flemish Community), Spain, the Netherlands and Austria). In addition, Bulgaria and Malta have also recently adopted a comprehensive ELET strategy. Other countries, such as Germany for example, do not have a comprehensive early leaving strategy *per se*, but various national initiatives and action frameworks include ELVET specific targets. Encouraging participation and retention in apprenticeships is a key part of the strategies in the United Kingdom (England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland), while the Irish action plan for educational inclusion ('Delivering

equality of opportunity in schools') is general education focussed. Strategic level thinking in terms of how to address early leaving in VET in an inclusive manner does not only take place at national/regional level. The unique feature of the Flemish Community of Belgium is the proactive approach of many individual cities and schools/VET providers in tackling ELET through a joined-up strategy. Furthermore, VET providers in Belgium (Flemish Community), Denmark and the Netherlands are required to draft annual action plans on ELVET.

6.4.2. Recent ELVET specific policies and measures

This section maps out the ELVET specific measures the European countries have in place and the measures that rely on traditional VET pedagogies as means of reducing early leaving. They have been identified from European and international literature⁽¹⁹⁾ or through interviews (national stakeholders and practitioners) in eight countries (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, France, Croatia, Italy, Austria and Portugal). The measures selected concern lower and upper secondary level VET; the review excludes policies/measures introduced to tackle early leaving from higher and continuing VET, albeit some of the second chance measures discussed may operate on the borderline between initial and continuing vocational education and training (IVET and CVET).

Overall, the initial mapping resulted in the identification and mapping of over 330 policies and measures across 29 countries⁽²⁰⁾ and over 100 measures were examined in greater detail:

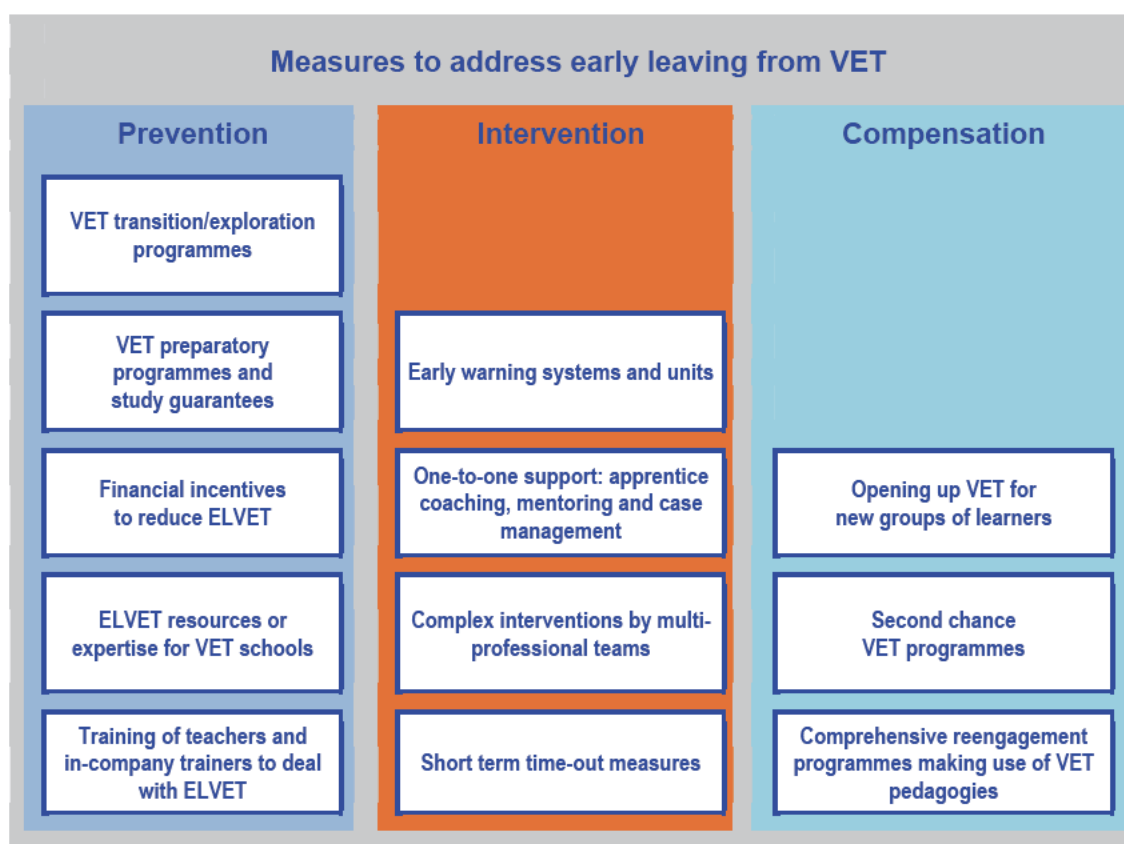
- early leaving measures specific to the VET sector only could be identified in 20 countries (Belgium (French and Flemish Communities), Bulgaria, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Slovenia, Finland, the United Kingdom and Norway);
- VET relevant early leaving measures, which however have broader target groups or goals (e.g. within the general education sector), could be identified in further 11 countries (Belgium (German-speaking Community), the Czech Republic, Croatia, Cyprus, Latvia, Hungary, Portugal, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland and Iceland);
- no measures to address early leaving in VET could be identified through the chosen research method in three countries (Romania, Liechtenstein and Turkey).

The measures identified have been considered according to the timing of the intervention in the context of a journey of a typical VET student or a dropout (prevention, intervention and compensation), the level of the intervention (system level *versus* individual providers) and the type of IVET (school-based VET *versus* apprenticeships and other forms of work-based learning).

⁽¹⁹⁾ European and international literature from 2010 onwards, including overview reports, 106 country reports, good practice databases and analytical reports. No national, country specific sources such as websites of ministries and education authorities, VET providers, non-governmental organisations, or project sites were examined as part of this assignment

⁽²⁰⁾ Belgium (three Communities), Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Finland, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. No measures identified through the chosen research method: Lithuania, Romania and Turkey.

Figure 6.8: Map of measures to address early leaving from VET



Source: Cedefop.

Preventing early leaving from VET

Preventive measures ⁽²¹⁾ take many different forms and sizes but five types are examined in this section which are both early leaving and VET specific.

Transition programmes

Many VET students drop out completely or change their course soon after starting their studies if they realise they have made a wrong course selection. As already mentioned, many early exits from VET are caused by unprepared, ill-informed and unsupported transitions.

There are a few distinctive VET specific approaches that countries have adopted to facilitate more *supported, prepared and informed* transitions to young people who are vulnerable to disengagement. Some countries offer VET study/career exploration programmes that essentially give young people who are interested in VET but have not been able to enrol in any course, an opportunity to spend a period of time trying out different courses, visit companies and undertake work-based training in companies or in different workshops and improve their previous test results so as to improve their chances of finding a right VET school or an employer to take them on as an apprentice.

⁽²¹⁾ 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. At times the difference between 'prevention' and 'intervention' measures is marginal and some measures could potentially be grouped in either one of the categories.

These career exploration opportunities help young people to learn about occupations, understand what studies and work in different sectors is really like and learn about their own interests as well as their strengths and weaknesses. The programmes can also include on-going 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 programme typically results in a certificate and/or exemptions and participants are typically in a much stronger position to find a training place than before the programme. Transitional programmes were identified for example in Germany, the Netherlands and Finland.

VET preparatory programmes and study guarantees

Some countries like Germany and Austria have operated youth guarantee schemes in the VET sector, the apprenticeship sector in particular, already for some time. They have well established pre-apprenticeship programmes to ensure that all young people who are looking for an apprenticeship contract with a training company, but do not succeed in finding one, are offered alternative forms of training in which they can get prepared for a training contract.

They essentially help unqualified young people to up-skill and become better prepared to obtain and retain an apprenticeship place. They usually involve an on-the-job training period in a company, several companies or in a workshop, alongside some school-based learning. Usually the on-the-job training does not pay as well as an actual apprenticeship place and employers are heavily subsidised by the state. In recent years, such programmes have been introduced in the German-speaking Community of Belgium and Denmark too.

Germany, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom (England, Wales) also offer skills based bridging/preparatory programmes that prepare young people for VET (albeit offer no guarantee of further training as such). They are usually for students who are not sufficiently qualified/skilled to enter the next stage and give an opportunity to catch up on learning, gain new skills, improve grades and gain work experience.

Financial incentives to reduce ELVET

Performance-based funding of VET can be linked to ELVET goals as a way of encouraging and even 'forcing' providers to invest in measures to address the problem. Per capita student funding is linked to qualification completion and dropout rates at least in Slovenia, Finland, and the United Kingdom. In addition, in the United Kingdom, provider funding also depends on the success rate of VET graduates in terms of long-term employment. For example, former students and apprentices may be tracked to see whether they are in employment following the course.

In France, though the incentives are not directly financial, the approach to prevent dropping out relies on making schools more strongly responsible for the pathways of their students. Heads of schools have formal responsibility to ensure young people's pathways even once they dropped out from their institution, meaning that they are on one hand incentivised to prevent dropping out and on the other hand required to take on action if a person drops out prematurely.

The carrot and stick approach has been used in the Netherlands where underperforming secondary-level VET (upper secondary vocational education, *middelbaar beroepsonderwijs* – MBO) schools may be given fines if they do not have an action plan in place to reduce early leaving. Those who oppose it argue that it will put the students of those VET schools in an even weaker position if funding is cut. Supporters feel that it is necessary to introduce something that forces schools to take action when nothing else has convinced them to take action.

Financial incentives for employers to take on apprentices, especially from at risk backgrounds, are in particular need during economic downturn. The prospects of weaker apprentice candidates finding a placement diminish in a tight labour market as they compete with candidates with more solid education or employment backgrounds in a market with fewer placements to offer. In generic terms, it is a long standing mainstream tradition for some countries to offer a wage subsidy to employers who take on an apprentice, whilst in others it is a more recent trend. It is nevertheless clear that many countries have attempted to mitigate the effects of the financial crisis on the level of early leaving from VET by introducing new or temporary financial incentive schemes to encourage more companies to take on low qualified youth and other vulnerable young people at risk of ELVET as apprentices despite of the economic turmoil. In Germany, Ireland, Finland and Norway, such subsidy schemes have targeted early school leavers.

Another way of incentivising employers to reduce ELVET is through performance-based bonuses where companies receive a bonus upon an apprentice's successful completion of a year or the whole apprenticeship. Such incentives exist in the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland).

Apprenticeship grants for students may incentivise students to remain in their apprenticeship. Some countries base the apprenticeship grants on situational circumstances, whilst others distribute them according to universalistic welfare principles. Bulgaria, Lithuania and the United Kingdom have ELVET specific incentives in a sense that apprentices may receive additional financial support if they are in financial difficulties for example due to caring responsibilities so as to reduce the risk of them dropping out due to financial concerns.

In relation to school based VET, in Sweden the study allowance available for any upper secondary level student (academic or vocational) may be removed if the students show signs of dropping out, like high levels of truancy. The threat of removing the allowance is hoped to act as an incentive to remain in learning. In Lithuania, students may be awarded a (financial) bonus for good performance and attendance.

ELVET expertise and resources for VET providers

Individual VET providers do not always have the expertise to address high levels of early leaving or they are lacking the drive to prioritise the topic. There are programmes for example in Belgium (French Community), Denmark, France, Italy, Portugal and Finland that offer individual VET providers with additional resources or expertise to handle the problem. 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 period of time or visits the provider on regular basis to support implementation on an on-going manner 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.

The provision of ELVET expertise to the providers goes hand in hand with the need for better ELVET data. There are now many countries that have new ELVET data tools and programmes in place to guide developments in this field (e.g. Belgium (Flemish Community), Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Italy, the Netherlands and Norway). Most of the new tools cover both general and vocational education (although ELVET data related to apprenticeships is outside the remit of some of these tools) and Denmark is the only country where a VET specific ELVET data collection tool has been drafted to help VET schools and authorities to tackle the problem.

Training of teachers and in-company trainers to deal with ELVET

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 signs of losing an interest in their studies have an impact on ELVET. Improvement of VET teachers' skills is particularly pertinent for the VET sector in countries where the sector attracts higher than average share of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Recently VET teachers in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary and Slovenia have received training on how to support and deal with students demonstrating signs of dropping out. The 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 without being addressed may lead into disengagement, how to improve student motivation and how to improve their attendance rates. In the United Kingdom (Wales), professional standards for teachers have been introduced to support the identification of young people at risk of early leaving.

Intervention measures

Early leaving and VET specific intervention measures⁽²²⁾ range from early warning systems and support provided by mentors/case workers and teams of professionals, to external time-out measures. Career guidance has not been examined as part of this exercise as it is seen as part of the broader framework of support for young people (see Chapter 5 on the role of education and career guidance in tackling ELET).

Early warning systems and units

Early warning systems and units have been developed as a proactive response to the need to intervene as soon as students start sending distress signals rather than acting in a reactive manner when he/she has already made their decision to leave. Some early warning systems are purely focussed on monitoring absenteeism, while others are more sophisticated with a specific unit having been set up. They might involve recruiting a dedicated professional at the VET school (or local authority) in charge of tracking down absent students, meeting with students 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.

Such systems or units are available in VET schools for example in Belgium (French and Flemish Communities), Bulgaria, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands and Slovakia. Some of these cover both general education and vocational training strands while others are specific to the VET sector.

It is not uncommon for VET schools which may not benefit from a specific 'early warning measure' as such to set up their own individual procedures for detecting at risk cases. In some schools, this work is done by assigning VET students with individual pathway counsellors, teachers are requested to complete assessments of students' behaviour/attitude or regular meetings are held with work-place trainers as a way of identifying problems early.

One-to-one support: apprentice coaching, mentoring and case management

Poor basic and transversal skills, and poor grades, can be a trigger for a young person to drop out. At the same time conflicts and misunderstandings between an apprentice and in-company

⁽²²⁾ Intervention measures are those that support young people during their VET studies.

trainer/employer may also lead into a decision on the part of the apprentice to leave training prematurely.

To prevent such situations escalating to a point where an apprentice wants to exit the training early, apprentice coaching programmes have been developed in Belgium (German-speaking Community), Germany, Austria and the United Kingdom. They involve employment 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 if required help to reduce language and educational defects and/or foster the learning of theoretical knowledge and practical skills. They may also provide conflict management assistance.

While the coaching programmes can yield very positive results, the current challenges relate to the over-reliance on volunteer mentors and over-supply of different apprenticeship mentoring/coaching initiatives operating parallel to another, leading to confusion among employers (Germany) and low take-up due to lack of awareness of the initiative among employers (Austria).

Mentoring, coaching and other measures that offer one-to-one support for at risk students attending school-based VET could be identified from Belgium, France, Hungary and Austria. Some of these are available for students from schools of both general and vocational training but many, such as the one from Hungary, have targeted activities for VET students. The peer-to-peer coaching example from the Flemish Community of Belgium is particularly unique in that it involves training previous dropouts as mediators/coaches.

Complex interventions by multi-professional teams

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 with the help of a mentor, for example, 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 individual professionals such as counsellors or psychologists or teams of professionals, for instance multi-professional school care teams and student support services.

The VET legislation in many countries stipulate that students should have an access to support services such as career, psychological, counselling, special and/or social pedagogical services. In practice, this however does not always materialise. Previous research has indicated that the availability of multi-professional support has been more sparsely available within the VET sector than within the general upper secondary sector (see Section 4.3 on multi-agency partnerships in tackling ELET) even if many VET schools, albeit not all, host a more challenging student population and display higher than average early leaving rates ⁽²³⁾.

This is one of the reasons why countries like Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Hungary, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, Finland and Iceland, for instance have recently reinforced the availability of professional counselling and support services within VET schools ⁽²⁴⁾.

Short term time out measures

⁽²³⁾ E.g. shown by field work carried out as part of European Parliament, 2011.

⁽²⁴⁾ In many cases similar provisions exist in the general education sector.

Short-term time out measures offer VET students facing personal or academic difficulties a respite from their studies in an 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. Their key characteristics include small group sizes, flexible approach, specialist educators/counsellors who work in close contact with other professionals and out-of-school premises which often only very remotely resemble classrooms. Examples of such measures available for IVET students could be identified in Belgium (French and Flemish Communities), Germany, France, Luxembourg, Hungary, Austria and the United Kingdom, for example.

Compensatory measures (reintegration via VET)

VET has a big part to play in the reintegration arena. First, many early leavers from both general and vocational education choose VET when they return to learning. Thus VET systems accommodate an important share of learners who have either dropped out or decided to change their studies from one course, provider or type of learning to another. Second, an overwhelming majority, if not all remedial measures – programmes that have been set up specifically to work with young people who have struggled in mainstream learning for personal, behavioural or academic reasons – make use of pedagogies that originate from VET, such as work-based learning pedagogies.

With this role in mind, the remedial measures identified through the mapping have been categorised into two groups:

- 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;
- second chance VET programmes; and
- measures that provide a supported pathway back to learning and make use of VET pedagogies as an important pedagogical tool.

Opening up VET for new groups of learners

Access to VET courses for unqualified youth has been opened up recently in Estonia, Spain, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia and Norway. Typically this has meant opening access to VET for early school leavers who previously did not qualify for VET due to lacking compulsory education qualification, for example.

Financial incentives are opening up VET as a possibility for some early leavers to return to VET in Estonia, Greece, France, Lithuania, Slovakia and Iceland, for example. Most of these come in the form of learning vouchers.

Second chance VET programmes

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. Some of the second chance VET programmes are targeted at early leavers who left school early for positive reasons rather than negatives ones. They can be found in various forms in Bulgaria, Ireland, Spain, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Malta and Poland, for example.

Comprehensive reengagement programmes making use of VET pedagogies

Comprehensive reengagement programmes provide supported pathways back to learning for young people from general education and VET backgrounds. What is however typical is the use of VET

pedagogies in the (re)engagement process. The support services provided by comprehensive reengagement programmes start from the 'basics' such as helping young people to re-discover 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.

Remedial measures do not tend to lead up to formal qualifications, but they are used as a way of re-stimulating interest in learning or upskilling learners and thereby offering a stepping stone and improve their chance of finding a job or a study place within the formal education/training system.

Such programmes are well established mainstream measures in many countries. This includes measures in Denmark (production schools), Germany (production schools), France (E2C), Luxembourg (*École de la deuxième chance*, E2C), Austria (workshops), Poland (voluntary labour corps), Slovenia (project learning for young adults (PUM) and production schools), Finland (youth workshops), just to mention a few. All of the above mentioned measures utilise VET or VET pedagogies as a way of enticing young people with learning but their ultimate goal is to reintegrate them back into formal learning or employment.

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GLOSSARY

I. Classifications

International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 1997 and 2011)

The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) was designed to facilitate the compilation and comparison of education statistics both within and across national boundaries. It combines two cross-classification variables (levels and fields of education) with the type of education (general/vocational/pre-vocational) or students' intended destination (tertiary education or direct entry into the labour market). The ISCED 97 ⁽¹⁾ version distinguishes seven levels of education. The lowest level, ISCED 0, covers pre-primary education, but this does not embrace the earliest years of early childhood education and care. The ISCED methodology assumes that a number of criteria exist which can help allocate an education programme to a particular level of education. However, depending on the level and type of education concerned, a hierarchical ranking system of main and subsidiary criteria operates. At pre-primary level, the main criteria include whether the programme is school or centre-based as well as the minimum entry and the upper age limits; subsidiary criteria include staff qualifications.

ISCED 0 (1997): Pre-primary education

Pre-primary education is defined as the initial stage of organised instruction. It is school-based or centre-based and is designed for children aged at least 3 years.

ISCED 1 (1997): Primary education

This level begins between 5 and 7 years of age, is compulsory in all countries and generally lasts from 4 to 6 years.

ISCED 2 (1997): Lower secondary education

Continues the basic programmes of primary education, although teaching is typically more subject-focused. Usually, the end of this level coincides with the end of compulsory education.

ISCED 3 (1997): Upper secondary education

This level generally begins at the end of compulsory education. The entrance age is typically 15 or 16 years. Entrance qualifications (completion of compulsory education) and other minimum entry requirements are usually needed. Instruction is often more subject-oriented than at ISCED level 2. The typical duration of ISCED level 3 varies from two to five years.

ISCED 4 (1997): Post-secondary non-tertiary education

These programmes straddle the boundary between upper secondary and tertiary education. They serve to broaden the knowledge of ISCED level 3 graduates. Typical examples are programmes designed to prepare pupils for studies at level 5, or programmes designed to prepare pupils for direct entry to the labour market.

ISCED 5 (1997): Tertiary education (first stage)

Entry to these programmes normally requires the successful completion of ISCED level 3 or 4. This level includes tertiary programmes with academic orientation (type A) which are largely theoretically based and tertiary programmes with occupation orientation (type B) which are typically shorter than type A programmes and geared for entry into the labour market.

(1) http://www.uis.unesco.org/ev.php?ID=3813_201&ID2=DO_TOPIC

ISCED 6 (1997): Tertiary education (second stage)

This level is reserved for tertiary studies that lead to an advanced research qualification (Ph.D. or doctorate).

The ISCED classification has been updated periodically to reflect the on-going evolution of education systems around the world, and the new ISCED 2011 ⁽²⁾ classification has recently replaced ISCED 1997. The ISCED 2011 provides improved definitions and a greater scope to better monitor global patterns in education. To this end, the sections on tertiary and early childhood education have been substantially revised. In addition, ISCED 2011 presents new coding schemes for education programmes and educational attainment:

ISCED 0-2 (2011): Less than primary, primary and lower secondary (levels 0-2)

ISCED 3-4 (2011): Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary (levels 3 and 4)

ISCED 5-8 (2011): Short-cycle tertiary, bachelor or equivalent, master or equivalent and doctoral or equivalent (levels 5-8)

II. Definitions

Absenteeism: refers to persistent absence from school or training. In this report, the term covers a range of behaviours, including chronic absenteeism, school refusal and truancy.

At risk of poverty or social exclusion: this Eurostat indicator refers to the situation of people either at risk of poverty, or severely materially deprived, or living in a household with a very low work intensity. This particular indicator sums up the number of individuals who belong to either of these groups. **'At risk of poverty'** refers to the situation where people whose disposable income is below their national at-risk-of-poverty threshold. **'Material deprivation'** relates to economic strain and inability to afford a selection of items that are considered necessary or desirable. **'Very low work intensity'** refers to the number of persons living in a household and who have worked at less than 20 % of their potential during the past year. Children who suffer from more than one dimension of poverty at the same time are counted only once.

Central/top-level regulations/recommendations: regulations are laws, rules or other orders prescribed by public authorities at ministerial level to regulate conduct. Recommendations are official documents proposing the use of non-mandatory tools, methods and/or strategies.

Compensation policies/measures: aim to help those who left school prematurely to re-engage in the system. They offer young people routes to re-enter education and training to gain the qualifications they missed. Second chance education is a prime example of a compensation measure.

Comprehensive strategy to tackle early leaving from education and training: a strategy that should cover all levels of education and involve all relevant policy areas affecting children and young people. It should seek a balanced approach between prevention, intervention and compensation and should include appropriate measures to meet the needs of high risk groups. A comprehensive strategy should be evidence-based and address the specific circumstances in a country. It might take the form of an action plan or guidelines for policy makers at different levels to implement measures against early leaving, or it might be a national programme which supports an evidence-based and comprehensive approach to the problem

⁽²⁾ <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Library/Documents/2011-international-standard-classification-education-isced-2012-en.pdf>

Cross-government cooperation: coordination across different areas (horizontal) or between different levels of government (vertical) to provide a joined-up and more effective approach to all aspects of a problem. Horizontally, cooperation may be between different ministries or departments or between the different divisions of a ministry responsible for different policy areas. Vertically it may involve national, regional and local levels of government and administration.

Cross-sector cooperation: cooperation of public, private and non-governmental stakeholders, such as public authorities, teachers, parents, students and their representative associations together with guidance centers, trade unions, employers, and other experts such as social workers or school psychologists.

Cross-curricular topic: a topic taught across the whole curriculum.

Desegregation policies in schools: aim to widen the social composition of 'disadvantaged' schools and improve the attainment levels of children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, particularly where parents also have a low level of educational attainment.

Early leaving from education and training (ELET): refers to students leaving education or initial training before completing the upper secondary level.

Early tracking: separating students into different educational (e.g. academic or vocational) tracks or pathways on the basis of their achievement at an early stage in their school career. It can be problematic in cases where the full academic potential of students is incomplete at the time of tracking and consequently students are misallocated.

Early warning systems: allow intervention measures to be taken before learning difficulties or other problems become ingrained and therefore more difficult to address. They seek to detect early signs that students may be at risk of early leaving such as a decline in school performance or absenteeism.

Education and career guidance: primarily refers to the practice used to support students in their choice of education and career path. Education and career guidance is provided by in-school guidance/counselling services and it may be taught in the classroom as a subject/topic which forms part of the compulsory curriculum. Guidance seeks to provide students with information as well as to develop the decision-making and other skills important in managing their own educational or career choices. Education and career guidance may also include psycho-educational work or counselling to help students in their progression through school, particularly for students at risk of leaving education early. Extra support is often provided at times of transition between the stages of education or when transferring to other pathways or tracks. Guidance may be complemented by extra-curricular activities and supported by external partners (e.g. for the provision of work experience, etc.).

Educational tracks/pathways: refer to the types of education students may be directed towards based on their ability or aptitude often at the end of primary education but later in some countries. Whilst this need not necessarily involve a division into academic/general and vocational tracks, in practice this tends to be the case. This definition does not include streaming, which involves pupils in general education being placed in ability groups within the same school

Groups at risk: although the reasons for early leaving are highly individual, students who are at risk are in general more likely to come from: poor, socially disadvantaged or minority/migrant backgrounds or have parents with low levels of educational attainment. Other students at risk belong to vulnerable groups such as teenage mothers; young people brought up in public care; those with special educational needs; those who must contribute to the family income or take adult responsibilities; as

well as those who have not achieved well in school or have had a history of disengagement. Boys are also more likely than girls to leave school early.

Household: is defined as a group of two or more people living together in a house or a part of a house and sharing a common budget. Any person stating that they live on their own and have their own budget is considered to be living in a single-person household. Only private households are included in the survey.

Intervention policies/measures: aim to identify students showing early signs of the difficulties associated with leaving education and training prematurely with a view to providing targeted support. Intervention measures may be directed at high risk groups or at individuals at any level of education from early childhood education and care to upper secondary education.

Jobless households: are households where no member is in employment, i.e. all members are either unemployed or inactive.

Multi-agency partnerships: are created in and around education, where professionals from different disciplines (teachers, counsellors, social workers, psychologists, etc.) work together at local/school level to support disadvantaged children.

National Reform Programme: presents a country's policies and measures to sustain growth and jobs in order to reach the Europe 2020 targets. All EU Member States have committed to the Europe 2020 strategy but, as each country has different economic circumstances, it translates the overall EU objectives into national targets within its own National Reform Programme.

Positive discrimination measures: include measures such as educational priority zones and their associated programmes, which provide targeted support to schools in disadvantaged areas. They aim to improve educational provision, give additional support to students and create innovative learning environments adapted to students' specific needs. Positive discrimination measures are often combined with active networking and strong cooperation between the schools involved.

Prevention policies/measures: aim to reduce students' risk of leaving education and training early by addressing potential problems before they affect young people at risk. . Such measures seek to optimise the provision of education and training, remove obstacles to educational success, and ensure better learning outcomes.

Socio-economic background: the combination of an individual's or family's economic and social position, based on income, education, occupation and home environment.

Socio-economic segregation of schools: refers to a concentration of students with similar socio-economic backgrounds in one school. In schools where the majority of the student population is affected by socio-economic disadvantage, which often interplays with migrant or minority status, student achievement tends to be negatively affected and the risk of ELET increased.

Steering documents: official documents establishing the basic central-/top-level framework which govern the learning and development of young people in education and training institutions. It may include any or all of the following: learning content, learning objectives, attainment targets, guidelines on children's assessment or model educational material. Several types of documents which allow different degrees of flexibility in the way they are applied may exist at the same time and for the same age range in a country or state (e.g. educational legislation, central-/top-level curriculum, central guidelines and official agreements). In contrast, there may be only one main central-/top-level framework for the curriculum in a country/region within a country, although this may be divided into several sub-documents.

Top-level authority: refers to the level of government with responsibility for education. For most countries, this is the national (state) government. In some cases, however, decision-making occurs at a different level, namely that of the governments of the Communities in Belgium, the *Länder* in Germany, the governments of the Autonomous Communities in addition to the central government in Spain, the devolved administrations of the United Kingdom, and the Cantons in Switzerland.

Youth guarantee schemes: are intended to provide for a smooth transition between school and work, support labour market integration and make sure that no young person is left out of education training or employment. The 'youth guarantee' aims to ensure that all young people under the age of 25, who lose their job or do not find work quickly after leaving education, receive a good-quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship. They should receive such an offer within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education.

NATIONAL INFORMATION SHEETS

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| Belgium – French Community | 146 |
| Belgium – German-speaking Community | 148 |
| Belgium – Flemish Community | 149 |
| Bulgaria | 151 |
| Czech Republic | 153 |
| Denmark | 155 |
| Germany | 157 |
| Estonia | 160 |
| Ireland | 161 |
| Greece | 163 |
| Spain | 165 |
| France | 168 |
| Croatia | 171 |
| Italy | 172 |
| Cyprus | 174 |
| Latvia | 175 |
| Lithuania | 177 |
| Luxembourg | 179 |
| Hungary | 182 |
| Malta | 184 |
| The Netherlands | 186 |
| Austria | 188 |
| Poland | 190 |
| Portugal | 193 |
| Romania | 195 |
| Slovenia | 198 |
| Slovakia | 199 |
| Finland | 200 |
| Sweden | 202 |
| United Kingdom – England | 204 |
| United Kingdom – Wales | 206 |
| United Kingdom – Northern Ireland | 208 |
| United Kingdom – Scotland | 210 |
| Switzerland | 212 |
| Iceland | 214 |
| Norway | 216 |
| Turkey | 218 |

The national information sheets provide a concise overview of some important aspects of Early Leaving from Education and Training (ELET) and Early Leaving from Vocational Education and Training (ELVET). The information is structured into 6 topics:

- ELET rate and national target;
- Definition(s);
- National data collection;
- Strategy, policies and measures;
- Cross-sector cooperation;
- Education and career guidance.

The information on ELET comes mainly from the Eurydice network, with the exception of the national rates of early leavers provided by the Eurostat Labour Force Survey (LFS).

The information in the 'Recent ELVET policies and measures' sub-section has been provided by CEDEFOP. The main policies and measures to tackle ELVET have been identified through a review of recent European and international literature (from 2010 onwards) or through interviews (national stakeholders and practitioners) in eight countries (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, France, Croatia, Italy, Austria and Portugal).

For more information on the methodology, please see the Introduction.

ELET rate and national target

This section presents the situation of the countries in terms of early leavers in a visual way:

- The progression between 2009 and 2013 in terms of rate of early leavers is represented with two horizontal bars.
- The national target to reduce ELET by 2020 (only for EU Member States) is shown as a vertical line on the statistical bars for 2009 and 2013.

- The Europe 2020 headline target to reduce the rate of early leavers below 10 % is indicated as a reference point on all national graphics. It is represented by a vertical red dotted line.

The ELET data was extracted in October 2014 from the Eurostat Labour Force Survey (see the Glossary). The indicator is defined as the percentage of the population aged 18-24 with lower secondary education (ISCED levels 0, 1, 2 or 3 c short) at most and who were not in further education or training during the four weeks preceding the survey ⁽¹⁾.

The EU 2020 headline target for reducing early leaving has been translated by Member States into national targets, reflecting the different social and economic circumstances of each country. National Reform Programmes (NRPs) submitted each year by Member States to the European Commission show the progress made in attaining these national targets. In April 2011, all EU-27 countries, with the exception of the United Kingdom, set their national quantitative target for reducing ELET for the first time. The national targets indicated in the national graphics correspond to the latest ones, as indicated in the 2014 NRPs.

Any on-going revision, intermediate target or additional regional targets are specified in the comment below the graphic.

Definition(s)

This section provides the definition(s) of early leavers used at national/regional level: the Eurostat definition, other national definitions of early leavers or, in some cases, other similar concepts such as 'absenteeism', 'school drop-out' or 'not in education, employment or training' (NEET).

The way early leaving is defined is often linked to the data collection system in place and this, in

turn, can have an impact on the policies that are being defined to prevent or reduce early leaving.

National data collection

This section specifies whether, besides (or instead of) the Eurostat LFS data collection, other types of data collections are used at national level: student registers/databases, qualitative or quantitative surveys/studies or other tools.

Information on the responsible authorities, the levels at which the data is aggregated and the frequency of the data collection is provided. Whenever the data collections are made publicly available, the related hyperlinks are indicated.

Further information concerning the type of data collected (age, gender, socio-economic background, education level of parents, citizenship/nationality, native/non-native, mother tongue, area of residence) are available in the comparative report (see Figure 1.5).

Strategy, policies and measures

This section is divided into three sub-sections:

- Comprehensive ELET strategy

Developing and implementing comprehensive strategies has been recommended by the EU Education Council ⁽²⁾. A comprehensive national strategy to tackle early leaving should address all levels of education, involve stakeholders from different policy areas and balance prevention, intervention and compensation measures. Some countries have other initiatives similar to a comprehensive strategy, which are also described in this sub-section.

- Recent policies and measures for tackling ELET

Recent policies and measures, which have been specifically set up to tackle early leaving but do not constitute a national strategy *per se*, are described in this sub-section. Only the most

⁽¹⁾ See also the Eurostat definition: http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Glossary:Early_school_leaver.

⁽²⁾ Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving, OJ C 191/2011.

recent policies and measures (since 2009) are considered. Policies and measures targeting specific groups at high risk of early leaving (for example: young people with a socio-economically disadvantaged, migrant or Roma background, or with special educational needs), are also indicated.

More information concerning on-going policies to tackle early leaving and other recent policies and measures that have not been specifically developed to tackle early leaving but that may contribute to reducing the rate of early leavers from education and training are available in the comparative report (see Chapter 3).

- Recent measures for tackling specifically early leaving in vocational education and training (ELVET)

Some of the key measures in place to prevent ELVET more specifically are outlined in this subsection. These are either ELVET-specific measures or they rely on traditional vocational education and training (VET) pedagogies as a means of reducing early leaving. Thus, measures that may have an indirect impact on ELVET but were not specifically developed to tackle it have not been considered. Up to five of the most ELVET-relevant measures per country are included. Further information concerning ELVET is available in Chapter 6.

Cross-sector cooperation

This section deals with various types of cross-government and cross-sector cooperation to tackle early leaving in general education:

- policy areas involved in developing and implementing early leaving policies alongside educational authorities;
- cooperation across the different authority levels (top, regional, local);
- multi-agency partnerships involving local/institutional stakeholders (head teachers, teachers, guidance specialists, psychologists, social workers, etc.).

Existing coordinating bodies are also mentioned.

Education and career guidance

This section focuses on policies and measures in general education directed towards education and career guidance as prevention, intervention and/or compensation measure to tackle early leaving.

The level(s) of education (primary, lower and upper secondary) are specified. This section also focuses on the way education and career guidance is embedded in the curriculum (be it a separate subject, a cross-curricular topic or an integrated topic into one or several subjects). The type of staff involved at school level is also described.

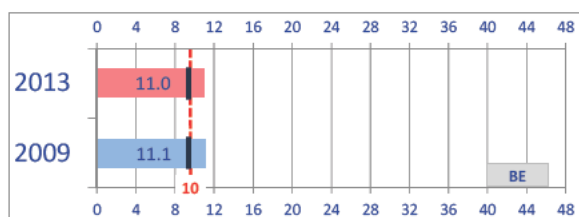
External education and guidance providers intervening either inside or outside the school are also presented.

Further information on guidance can also be found in **EURYPEDIA, the European Encyclopedia on National Education Systems**⁽³⁾, which provides up-to-date and comprehensive information by country. Chapter 12 is devoted to Educational Support and Guidance.

⁽³⁾ <http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/euryperia>

Belgium – French Community

ELET rate and national target



Source: Eurostat (LFS).

Belgium has established a national target of decreasing the rate of early leavers to 9.5 % by 2020. No specific regional target has been defined for the French Community of Belgium.

Definition(s)

A decree⁽⁴⁾ adopted on 21 November 2013 defines early leavers as having left school or training with less than or only lower secondary education and being no longer in education or training.

National data collection

Statistics Belgium is in charge of collecting the statistical data for the Eurostat Labour Force Survey.

The General Direction of Compulsory Education in the French Community of Belgium is monitoring data on absenteeism provided by schools throughout the year.

They are also responsible for aggregating data concerning compliance with compulsory education. This data is collected every two years

at the level of the French Community for the Walloon Region. In the Brussels-Capital Region, they are collected every year by a unit composed of civil servants from the French and the Flemish Communities (in this region, students may be enrolled in either of the two Communities). The data are not published but are available on request, anonymised and aggregated at top, regional or local level.

Strategy, policies and measures

1. Comprehensive strategy

The French Community of Belgium has no comprehensive strategy specifically designed to tackle early leaving.

2. Recent policies and measures

The main policies and measures implemented to tackle early leaving aim at:

- facilitating the integration of young children into pre-primary schools by reducing the number of children per teacher at the beginning of the school year; providing the support of physical education specialists in all pre-primary-schools;
- reducing grade retention, among others via a pilot project 'Takeoff!' (*Décolage!*) that promotes exchanges of information and expertise among schools on alternative practices to grade retention;
- increasing the flexibility and permeability of education pathways through the vocational education reform still under preparation. As one of the outcomes, adult education will become part of the 'qualification by units' continuum so that students leaving the school system without qualifications may be able to pursue their training later;
- offering continuing professional development for teachers on school drop-out;
- reinforcing the role of lifelong education and career guidance with a focus on students' personal projects;

⁽⁴⁾ Decree organising school devices to enhance youth well-being at school, school reintegration, prevention of school violence and school guidance (*Décret organisant divers dispositifs scolaires favorisant le bien-être des jeunes à l'école, l'accrochage scolaire, la prévention de la violence à l'école et l'accompagnement des démarches d'orientation scolaire*). It will come into force in 2014/15 (http://www.gallilex.cfwb.be/fr/leg_res_01.php?ncda=39909&referant=I01).

- increasing the number of newly arrived migrant students having access to language support;
- rearticulating the respective missions of the mobile teams and the mediation services in supporting teachers and pupils;
- implementing the 'Action plan to Ensure Peaceful Learning Conditions' (*Plan d'actions visant à garantir les conditions d'un apprentissage serein*) with the setting up of an 'Observatory of School Violence and Drop-out'.

Specific targeted measures for groups at risk are focused on students from socially disadvantaged and migrant backgrounds and on students with special educational needs.

3. Recent ELVET-specific measures

- The Expairs project (2012-2014) seeks to tackle ELVET specifically during 3rd year of VET (first year of 2nd degree) when most of the early exits take place. The project involves 45 VET schools and focuses on improving motivation and study experiences of students through better school climate (e.g. by meetings between students and teachers, involving parents, introducing student representation system, more open communication, etc.), individualised study pathways and career plans, innovative pedagogies such as individual and group project work, closer involvement of employers (job discovery days, company visits, motivational talks), reorganisation of school traditions (e.g. student assessment and school timetable), activities to boost self-esteem, better access to counselling, etc.
- In Brussels, a new unit on early leaving is being set up at a local apprentice centre to work in a proactive manner with apprentices and employers to prevent problems that can lead to a termination of an apprenticeship.

Cross-sector cooperation

A decree has recently been adopted⁽⁵⁾ on organising policy cooperation between the compulsory education and the youth sectors to enhance youth well-being at school, school reintegration, prevention of violence and vocational guidance. It will come into force in the 2014/15 school year and includes structural cooperation mechanisms as well as the setting-up of a coordinating committee.

This decree makes multi-agency partnerships at local/institutional level a legal obligation. They should involve school heads, teachers, psychologists, social and youth workers, nurses, speech and language specialists, and mediators.

Education and career guidance

Education and guidance is currently explicitly considered as a compensation measure for tackling early leaving. In the new decree mentioned under 'Definition', adopted in November 2013 and entering in force in September 2014, education and career guidance is also considered as a prevention and intervention measure to tackle early leaving.

All primary and secondary schools have to integrate career guidance in the education process, notably by raising awareness on the working world and providing information on education and training pathways. Special attention to this is given in secondary education. Teachers dealing with these issues do not have specific training.

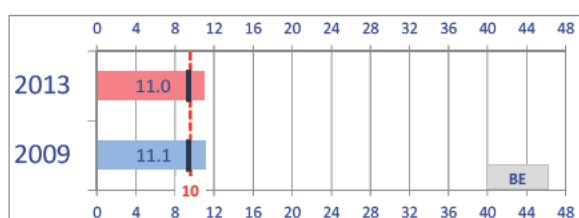
Students may also directly contact a psycho-medico-social centre (*centre psycho-médico-social* – CPMS) to receive advice on education and career guidance. Career guidance services are also provided by associations such as *Infor Jeunes* or *Service d'information sur les études et les professions*.

⁽⁵⁾ http://www.gallilex.cfwb.be/fr/leg_res_01.php?ncda=-39910&referant=I01

As a compensation measure for early leavers, the School Reintegration Services temporarily welcome young drop-outs to provide them with assistance and quickly reintegrate them into the education or training system.

Belgium – German-speaking Community

ELET rate and national target



Source: Eurostat (LFS).

Belgium has established a national target of decreasing the rate of early leavers to 9.5 % by 2020. No specific regional target has been defined for the German-speaking Community of Belgium.

Definition(s)

Only absenteeism is defined as non-compliance with compulsory education.

National data collection

Statistics Belgium is in charge of collecting the statistical data for the Eurostat Labour Force Survey.

No data collection on early leavers is available for the German-speaking Community of Belgium.

Strategy, policies and measures

1. Comprehensive strategy

The German-speaking Community of Belgium has no comprehensive strategy specifically designed to tackle early leaving.

2. Recent policies and measures

The Regional Development Concept *Ostbelgien Leben 2025*⁽⁶⁾ is being implemented since 2011. It integrates some of the following specific policies and measures related to early leaving among others:

- increasing the flexibility and permeability of educational pathways by setting up incentives during the transition from general education to vocational training and establishing measures to recognise the academic and vocational skills gained both in trainings and in professional experience;
- offering support for apprenticeship beginners with learning disabilities through differentiated modular teaching. This has been more systematised in the school year 2013/14 by setting up clear admission criteria to the modules;
- hiring specialised staff to support teachers with the aim to improve the quality of education. Technical advisory groups have been set up on the different taught subjects. A school development consultancy has also been implemented that aims at developing a school's learning culture, setting up systematic forms of reflection, quality assurance measures and feedback;
- 'Time-out' projects, designed as a full-time school for students excluded from their usual learning environment or in cases of drop-out. They aim at reducing early leaving by facilitating the reintegration to the education system of students at risk of early leaving.

Specific targeted measures for groups at risk are focused on students with migrant background.

3. Recent ELVET-specific measures

No ELVET specific initiatives have been identified but both recent and planned VET reforms are expected to contribute to reduced

⁽⁶⁾ <http://www.dgregierung.be>

ELET rates in the country. For example, a new preparatory apprenticeship year was established in 2010 with the aim of widening access to VET for early leavers and migrants in particular.

Cross-sector cooperation

Long-time cooperation exists between policy areas of employment, youth, social affairs and family.

Multi-agency partnerships at local/institutional level exist within projects (for instance in the 'Time-out' project, the case management team is comprised of the school leader, the psycho-medico-social centre (*Psycho-medizinisch-soziale Zentrum – PMS*⁽⁷⁾), the project coordinator, and other institutions. Teachers may also be involved in the cooperation.

Education and career guidance

Education and career guidance is explicitly considered as a prevention, intervention and compensation measure to tackle early leaving.

Guidance is embedded in the primary and secondary education curricula as a compulsory cross-curricular topic. The German-speaking Community of Belgium has adopted in 2011 a 'Skill Guide to Career Choice Preparation and Career Guidance' (*Rahmenplan Schulische Berufswahlvorbereitung und -orientierung*), which is aimed at preparing career choices and career guidance for primary and secondary education. According to the guide, schools are required to inform and advise students and their guardians about studies, training and career possibilities. Career guidance is part of school education and a crucial link between school and the world of work.

The professionals involved at school are teachers with no specific training in early leaving or in dealing with groups at risk.

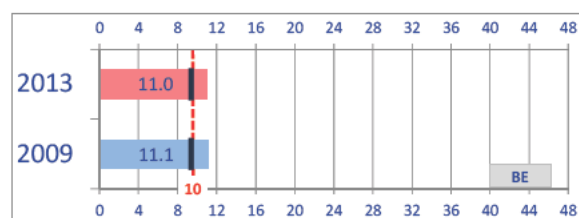
(7) As of September 2014, PMS are part of *Kaleido*, a new structure aiming at following-up children from 0 to 18 years of age concerning all health, education, youth and social affairs issues.

Students may also directly contact a PMS to receive advice about education and career guidance.

As a compensation measure, the Employment Office of the German-speaking Community of Belgium acts as the body responsible for adolescents and adults education and career guidance.

Belgium – Flemish Community

ELET rate and national target



Source: Eurostat (LFS).

Belgium has established a national target of decreasing the rate of early leavers to 9.5 % by 2020.

In addition to the national target, Belgium's Flemish Community has set up a regional target of reducing the rate of early leavers to 4.3 % by 2020 with an interim target of 5.7 % by 2016.

Definition(s)

Besides the Eurostat definition of early leavers, the Flemish Community of Belgium also uses an indicator on 'school leavers': students leaving education in a given year without upper secondary qualification.

National data collection

Statistics Belgium is in charge of collecting the statistical data for the Eurostat Labour Force Survey.

Since 2013/14, absenteeism is registered on a daily basis for all students in primary and

secondary education based on a unique identification record for each student registered in a Flemish school so that their progression can be tracked. The Flemish Ministry of Education and Training is responsible for this data collection. Aggregated data are available at top, regional, and local levels. They should be available at school level as of 2014.

The Policy Research Centre on Educational and School Careers analyses this administrative data at top and regional levels and make them publicly available ⁽⁸⁾.

Strategy, policy and measures

1. Comprehensive strategy

The *Pact 2020* was signed in January 2009. It aims, among others, at decreasing the number of early leavers in the Flemish Community of Belgium to the regional 2020 target.

In order to attain this objective, a comprehensive strategy has been developed: the 'Flemish Action Plan on Early School Leaving' (*Actieplan Vroegtijdig Schoolverlaten*) ⁽⁹⁾. The Flemish government is in charge of its overall monitoring. The action plan covers monitoring, prevention, intervention and compensation aspects, and defines responsibilities and timing (short and long term) until 2020. The main elements are:

- supporting the development of flexible learning pathways in secondary education (good practice, support to schools);
- opening further transitional pathways (for students from special education and from the alternate training system);
- prioritising early leaving in-service training for school heads and staff;
- collecting and spreading good practice on coaching;
- making data collection available at school level and enhancing school capacity to

analyse them and draft their early leaving school policy. During the screening process, the inspectorate will examine the effectiveness of the actions implemented to prevent early leaving;

- developing a local basic agreement to fight against early leaving between various actors (schools, Pupil Guidance Centres, Employment Services and Vocational Training Agency, companies, etc.);
- strengthening the relation to the work component (in the alternate training system, in vocational secondary education with compulsory internships, etc.);
- further developing and facilitating qualifying profession-oriented pathways for adults.

No extra budget is allocated for the Flemish action plan.

2. Recent policies and measures

- screening all students competences in the instruction language when they enter primary and secondary education (as of 2014);
- 'Time-out' projects for students temporarily excluded from school (between five days and six weeks).

Specific targeted measures for groups at risk are focused on students with disabilities needing extra support during the transition phase from school to work.

3. Recent ELVET-specific measures

Many of the ELET measures (e.g. school level early leaving data, Pupil Guidance Centres in supporting students at risk of dropping out, local action plans to tackle ELET and assessments of school's action plans on early leaving by the Education Inspectorate) also apply to the VET sector. The regional action plan calls for an increase in work-based learning opportunities. Furthermore,

- there are bridging programmes for VET students to allow individual students to take time off to develop work skills (e.g. arriving

⁽⁸⁾ www.steunpuntssl.be

⁽⁹⁾ http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/secundair/Actieplan-Vroegtijdig_Schoolverlaten_def.pdf

on time, how to communicate with superior staff/co-workers) and/or social skills if they are struggling at school or during work placement;

- many individual VET providers and cities have developed robust truancy monitoring systems, reporting arrangements and response procedures;
- many providers assign individual pathway counsellors to VET students, request teachers to complete assessments of students' behaviour/attitude or request employers providing apprenticeship and other work placements to inform the school of all absences and other problems as ways detecting problems that could lead to disengagement.

Cross-sector cooperation

The action plan for early leaving requires cooperation between the Departments of Education and Training; Work and Social Economy; Welfare, Public Health and Family; as well as with the Flemish Employment Services and Vocational Training Agency, the Agency for Quality in Education and Training, the Agency for Educational Communication, the Entrepreneurial Training Centre, the Pupil Guidance Centre, social partners, etc.

A thematic working group was established for the development of the action plan in which many stakeholders were involved. Moreover, a cross-sector steering group meets at least once a year to implement the action plan. Both groups are also involved in the monitoring and evaluation of the actions.

Multi-agency partnerships at local/institutional level are a legal obligation. They involve professionals such as school heads, teachers, guidance specialists, psychologists and social workers.

Education and career guidance

Education and career guidance is explicitly considered as a prevention and intervention measure to tackle early leaving but not as a compensation measure.

Education and career guidance is a compulsory cross-curricular topic in primary and secondary education. Guidance is managed by all school teachers. No specific training in early leaving is required but CPD programmes are available to teachers. CPD needs are defined by each institution.

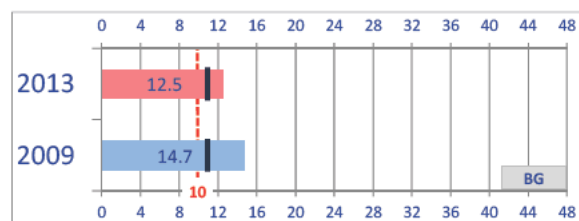
Students can also address directly the Pupil Guidance Centres. These centres provide guidance to students and support to schools in four domains: learning and studying, career education, psychological and social behaviour and preventive health care.

Existing compensation measures are primarily organised through the education system, but also by the Flemish Public Employment Services and Vocational Training Agency (e.g.: projects funded by the European Structural Funds to provide work experience for young early leavers or help them further develop their skills and attitudes).

Furthermore, the Pupil Guidance Centre website for student information on education and career opportunities ⁽¹⁰⁾ is currently being supplemented with information for early leavers.

Bulgaria

ELET rate and national target



Source: Eurostat (LFS).

Bulgaria has established a national target of decreasing the rate of early leavers to 11.0 % by 2020.

⁽¹⁰⁾ www.onderwijskiezer.be

Definition(s)

The Eurostat definition of early leavers is used, as well as a national one: being below 18 years of age and having only lower education or less.

National data collection

The National Statistical Institute (NSI) is in charge of collecting statistical data for the Eurostat Labour Force Survey. The NSI also publishes surveys on early leavers.

The Ministry of Education and Science uses data collected on a regular basis by the Centre for Information Assurance and Education via a web-based register (ADMIN). The data refers more precisely to drop-out and is analysed three times a year. It is aggregated at top-level and made publicly available each year ⁽¹¹⁾. Since the 2012/13 school year, the web-based register has been improved to integrate a tracking system of children's and students' progression.

Strategy, policies and measures

1. Comprehensive strategy

In October 2013 Bulgaria adopted a comprehensive strategy to tackle early leaving, the 'Strategy for Reducing Early School Leavers 2013-2020' ⁽¹²⁾. The main measures are:

- improving the quality of and access to education from early childhood onwards;

- preventing the constitution of classes with mono-ethnic origins and improving multicultural skills for all participants in the educational process;
- supporting students at risk of early leaving for financial reasons;
- developing models for vocational training;
- establishing a national system for validation of competences acquired through formal training or informal learning;
- elaborating and implementing career guidance systems adapted to various age groups;
- providing positive learning environments and individual support;
- developing and implementing early warning systems with an anonymised tracking system of individual students' progression;
- increasing the participation and involvement of parents;
- creating conditions for early leavers to reintegrate them into the education system, including distance, evening and part-time learning; learning opportunities in clubs, libraries and community centres; and workplace learning;
- establishing a national system for validation of non-formal and informal learning.

2. Recent policies and measures

All the main policies and measures related to early leaving are included in the new comprehensive strategy.

Specific targeted measures for groups at risk are focused on students from socially disadvantaged and minority/Roma backgrounds, as well as students with special educational needs.

3. Recent ELVET-specific measures

- VET providers are obliged to create school committees to monitor early warning signs and address concerns of students who are thus identified as being at risk.

⁽¹¹⁾ [^{\(12\)} <http://mon.bg/?h=downloadFile&fileId=1973>](http://www.nsi.bg/bg/content/3435/%D1%83%D1%87%D0%B0%D1%89%D0%B8-%D0%B8-%D0%BD%D0%B0%D0%BF%D1%83%D1%81%D0%BD%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B8-%D0%BF%D0%BE-%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B8%D1%87%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B8-%D0%B8-%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BF%D0%B5%D0%BD-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%BE%D0%B1%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%B5 and http://www.nsi.bg/bg/content/3437/%D1%83%D1%87%D0%B0%D1%89%D0%B8-i-%E2%80%93%D0%BA%D0%BB%D0%B0%D1%81-%D0%BD%D0%B0%D0%BF%D1%83%D1%81%D0%BD%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B8-%D0%BE%D0%B1%D1%89%D0%BE%D0%BE%D0%B1%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BB%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B5-%D0%B8-%D1%81%D0%BF%D0%B5%D1%86-%D0%B8%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%BD%D0%B8-%D1%83%D1%87%D0%B8%D0%BB%D0%B8%D1%89%D0%B0-%D0%BF%D0%BE-%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B8%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B8%D1%87%D0%B5%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B8.</p>
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- A new system of dual training is being introduced which targets students aged 16+, classified as early leavers.

Cross-sector cooperation

Cooperation on early leaving between policy areas of employment, youth, social affairs, family, justice and health are being developed, under the coordination of the Ministry of Education and Science.

Multi-agency partnerships at local/institutional level exist but partnership practice is not yet well established. They involve professionals such as school heads, teachers, guidance specialists, psychologists, social workers and youth workers.

Education and career guidance

Education and career guidance is explicitly considered as a prevention, intervention and compensation measure to tackle early leaving.

Education and career guidance is embedded in the primary and lower secondary curricula as a topic integrated into subjects. It is also taught as a separate optional subject from primary up to upper secondary education.

School staff dealing with education and career guidance are teachers specifically trained on this issue as well as education and career counsellors, psychologists, social workers and/or pedagogues.

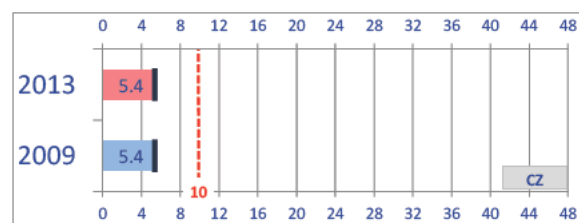
Guidance is also provided by the 28 Regional Centres for Career Guidance, which were recently established through the new 'System of career guidance in school', which came into force on 30/09/2013. These regional centres may also intervene at school.

Compensation measures are tested within projects such as 'Chance to work', 'Increasing employment opportunities for unemployed people through quality training' or 'New perspective'. These projects, which have guidance and motivational aspects, aim at reintegrating young early leavers into the formal

education and training systems using various forms of education: learning at a distance, evening learning and non-formal learning.

Czech Republic

ELET rate and national target



Source: Eurostat (LFS).

The Czech Republic has established a national target of maintaining the rate of early leavers below 5.5 %.

Definition(s)

For statistical purposes, the Czech Republic uses the Eurostat definition of early leavers.

National data collection

The Czech Statistical Office is in charge of collecting statistical data for the Eurostat Labour Force Survey. Aggregated and anonymised individual data are available upon request. A fee for processing the data may be charged.

Various ad hoc surveys on early leavers have also been conducted by the National Institute for Education (NÚV), providing contextual information on early leavers from education (especially from VET).

Strategy, policies and measures

1. Comprehensive strategy

There is no comprehensive strategy for early leaving.

2. Recent policies and measures

The main recent measure related to early leaving is the *VIP Kariéra II – KP* project, which aims at improving the quality of career guidance, in particular for groups at risk of early leaving (see below).

Specific targeted measures for groups at risk are focused on students from socially disadvantaged, migrant and minority/Roma backgrounds, as well as students with special educational needs.

3. Recent ELVET-specific measures

No ELVET specific initiatives exist but some of the measures mentioned for general education (e.g. guidance measures, the work of school guidance and counselling centres) also apply to the VET sector.

Cross-sector cooperation

In the Czech Republic, there is a tradition of cooperation between top-level policy areas. The policy areas of education, youth and sports (within one single ministry) cooperate with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Interior on measures related to tackling early leaving.

Multi-agency partnerships at local/institutional level are a legal obligation in order to provide support to students who require specific additional support and their parents. They involve professionals such as school heads, teachers (including teachers specifically trained for guidance and those specifically trained as school prevention specialists), psychologists, social workers and labour officer workers. The involvement of speech therapists mainly concerns primary education.

Education and career guidance

Education and career guidance is considered as a prevention and intervention measure to tackle early leaving, as specified in the 2004 Education Act and Decree 72/2005 on providing guidance in schools and school guidance facilities. It is not

explicitly considered as a compensation measure to tackle early leaving.

Education and career guidance is a compulsory integrated topic in the secondary curriculum but schools are free to decide on the way it is integrated (social sciences, citizenship education, preparation for the working life). School counselling services are available in primary and secondary education.

School staff involved are teachers not specifically trained in guidance, teachers specifically trained in guidance (*výchovní poradci*) who provide extra-curricular guidance services at school and teachers specifically trained as school prevention specialists (*školní metodici prevence*). In some schools, guidance is provided within school counselling centres (*školní poradenská pracoviště*). In this case, other professionals may also intervene, such as school psychologists and special educational needs specialists.

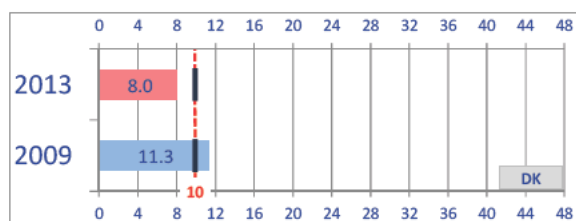
The systemic project *VIP Kariéra II – KP* ⁽¹³⁾, which is the follow-up of *VIP Kariéra* (2005-2008), was launched in 2010 as a joint initiative of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and the National Institute for Education. Its objectives include prevention of early leaving and identification of groups at risk. The project also aims at enhancing, rationalising and further improving the quality of career counselling, providing training and methodological support (e.g. an e-learning training for career counsellors).

Education and career guidance is also provided externally by the Pedagogical and Psychological Counselling Centres established by the regions and the Career Guidance Centre, which is part of the National Institute for Education.

⁽¹³⁾ <http://www.nuv.cz/projekty/karierove-poradenstvi>

Denmark

ELET rate and national target



Source: Eurostat (LFS).

Denmark has established a national target of decreasing the rate of early leavers to less than 10 % by 2020, which has already been reached. No new early leaving target has been set up.

In the 2011 Government Programme (*Et Danmark, der står sammen*)⁽¹⁴⁾, Denmark's target is to ensure that 95 % of young people achieve upper secondary or vocational education.

Definition(s)

The national definition used refers to young people who leave school without an upper secondary school leaving certificate.

National data collection

Statistics Denmark is in charge of collecting the statistical data for the Eurostat Labour Force Survey.

A specific database (*Ungedatabasen*) is managed by the Ministry of Education concerning the education and employment status of persons aged 15-29 (legal reporting obligation for schools, municipal authorities and tax authorities). Aggregated data is available at top level each month. As the database is new, only data concerning 15-17 year olds is publicly available for the moment⁽¹⁵⁾.

⁽¹⁴⁾ http://www.stm.dk/publikationer/Et_Danmark_-_der_staar_sammen_11/Regeringsgrundlag_okt_2011.pdf

⁽¹⁵⁾ <http://www.uvm.dk/Service/statistik/tvaerqaaende-statistik/ungedatabasen>

Strategy, policies and measures

1. Comprehensive strategy

Denmark has no comprehensive strategy for early leaving.

2. Recent policies and measures

The Danish Government adopted a major reform of the vocational education and training programmes on 24 February 2014, called 'Skilled for the future: Better and more attractive vocational education and training programmes' (*Aftale om bedre og mere attraktive erhvervsuddannelser*)⁽¹⁶⁾. Early leaving in Denmark is specifically connected to VET. Between 2013 and 2020, a total budget of 3 billion DKK is earmarked to implement the various initiatives. The main measures aim at:

- improving the quality of VET through increased teaching and work-related competences of teachers, management and school development programmes for school heads, better linkage between school-based activities and practical training in companies, strategy for IT use and quality supervision during the implementation phase via learning consultants;
- early evaluation of school students at risk of not continuing their education in order to provide them with individual schooling and to support them in achieving the required level;
- differentiating VET pathways for young people and adults (from 25 years of age onwards), with adult pathways building more on people's previous professional experiences and education, and teaching methodologies better suited for adult learners;
- education and career guidance;
- encouraging shared campuses between vocational education, training colleges and upper secondary schools;

⁽¹⁶⁾ <http://www.uvm.dk/~media/UVM/Filer/Udd/Erhverv/-PDF14/140224%20endelig%20aftaletekst%2025%20%20202014.ashx>

- reducing the access channels to VET programmes from 12 to 4, and implementing a basic programme with the same duration independent of the VET programme;
- improving the possibility to move to higher education;
- clarifying admission requirements and improving guidance for the transition phases from primary and lower education to youth education;
- offering targeted and flexible programmes for people who cannot start a VET or a youth programme in order to provide basic competences for the labour market;
- providing more practical training placements.

Specific targeted measures for groups at risk are focused on students from socially disadvantaged or migrant backgrounds and students with special educational needs.

3. Recent ELVET-specific measures

- Since 2008, VET schools are required to draft annual action plans on early leaving (Action Plans for Increased Completion/*Handlingsplaner for øget gennemførelse*) where they report on activities and progress in reducing ELVET.
- The EASY system is a platform which collects data on early leavers from all VET providers, including early leavers from school-based programmes and apprenticeships. The data is used to gather quarterly, annual and longitudinal overviews of ELVET at provider and different geographical levels (UNI-C EASY system).
- Retention Caravan (*Fastholdelseskaravane*) (2008-2013) and its follow-up initiative Retention Taskforce (*Fastholdelses taskforce*) (2013-2016) 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.

- Quality Patrol initiative (2010-2013)⁽¹⁷⁾ collected and disseminated knowledge, learning good practices related to existing local initiatives to reduce ELVET.
- Around 50 apprenticeship centres were established in 2013 at existing VET institutions to offer new school-based apprenticeships as an alternative to those VET students who cannot find a work-based apprenticeship. The apprenticeship centres have been designed to be as close to real working environments as possible.

Cross-sector cooperation

The VET reform requires cooperation between the education, employment, youth and social affairs policy areas. The Ministry of Education cooperates with social partners (Advisory Council for Initial Vocational Education and Training, the national trade committees, the local training committees) but cooperation mechanisms are not yet established.

Multi-agency partnerships are well established at local/institutional level and involve school heads, teachers and guidance professionals. Other types of professionals may be involved on an ad hoc basis.

Education and career guidance

Education and career guidance is explicitly considered as a prevention, intervention and compensation measure to tackle early leaving.

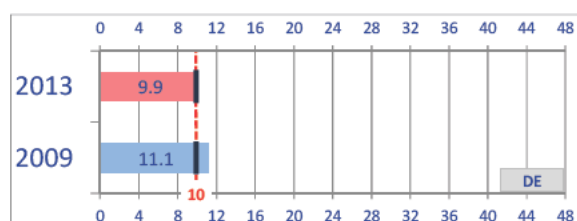
Education and career guidance is a compulsory integrated topic in primary and lower secondary education. Not specifically trained teachers are primarily responsible for integrating this subject in the curriculum. In upper secondary education, education and career guidance is provided by the municipal Youth Guidance Centres.

⁽¹⁷⁾ <http://www.emu.dk/omraade/eud>

Municipal Youth Guidance Centres organise guidance activities at school in lower secondary education, in cooperation with school heads. These centres are also responsible for guidance provision targeted at those who have left education early. The centres are legally obliged to establish contact with young people under the age of 25 who have not completed compulsory education and are outside the education system or the labour market. Guidance counsellors discuss the different opportunities and schemes with young people that may help them get back into education, training or employment.

Germany

ELET rate and national target



Source: Eurostat (LFS).

Germany has established a national target of decreasing the rate of early leavers to less than 10.0 % by 2020.

In addition to the EU 2020 national target, the Federal Government and the *Länder* aim to halve the number of a) adolescents leaving school without qualifications (from 8 % to 4 %) and b) young adults without vocational qualifications who are capable of undergoing training (from 17 % to 8.5 %) by 2015 ⁽¹⁸⁾.

Definition(s)

Besides the Eurostat definition of early leavers, Germany also defines 'drop-outs' as young people leaving school without having completed basic education.

⁽¹⁸⁾ https://www.bmbf.de/pub/beschluss_bildungs-gipfel_dresden_en.pdf

National data collection

The *Länder* Statistical Offices (top level authorities) are in charge of collecting statistical data for the Eurostat Labour Force Survey. Aggregated cross-*Länder* data is available each year both from the Standing Conference and the Federal Statistical Office ⁽¹⁹⁾.

The *Bund's* and *Länder's* statistical offices also collect data on the qualification of school leavers as part of the general school statistics on a monthly and yearly basis. These data are aggregated at top level (Federal/*Länder*) and published ⁽²⁰⁾ each year.

Strategy, policies and measures

1. Comprehensive strategy

The qualification Initiative 'Getting ahead through education' (*Aufstieg durch Bildung*) ⁽²¹⁾, implemented in 2007, implies close collaboration between the Federal and the *Länder* authorities in order to:

- identify learning deficits at an early stage;
- strengthen and consolidate the training culture of the dual system;
- draw up systematic competence profiles to facilitate the transition from general education to vocational training and dual systems;
- launch the 'Job starter Connect' initiative to improve preparation for training and the transition from school to vocational training.

The 'Action framework aiming at reducing the number of students leaving school without a first general education qualification, to secure transition from the lower secondary school to the next educational level or to vocational education

⁽¹⁹⁾ <https://www.destatis.de/DE/Publikationen/Thematisch/BildungForschungKultur/Internationales/Bildungsindikatoren.html>

⁽²⁰⁾ https://www.destatis.de/DE/Publikationen/Thematisch/BildungForschungKultur/Internationales/Bildungsindikatoren1023017137004.pdf?_blob=publicationFile

⁽²¹⁾ http://www.bmbf.de/pub/beschluss_bildungs-gipfel-dresden_en.pdf

and training in the dual system and to lower the number of trainee drop-outs' ⁽²²⁾ contains the following measures:

- individual promotion of disadvantaged children;
- continuing expansion of all-day schooling;
- improving teacher training;
- improving vocational orientation;
- special assistance for students who are at risk of not achieving the first general education qualification (*Hauptschule* leaving certificate);
- Intensifying encounters with the workplace.

The 'Support strategy for poorer performing students' (*Förderstrategie für leistungsschwächere Schülerinnen und Schüler*) ⁽²³⁾ includes the following measures:

- developing suitable all-day offers and strengthening of educational partnerships;
- developing teacher training;
- professionalising vocational guidance;
- individual support plans developed by teachers with the participation of other professionals and parents;
- facilitation and targeted support for longer learning periods;
- hands-on lesson planning;
- support for students with special educational needs to achieve the *Hauptschule* leaving certificate.

⁽²²⁾ *Handlungsrahmen zur Reduzierung der Zahl der Schülerinnen und Schüler ohne Schulabschluss, Sicherung der Anschlüsse, Verringerung der Zahl der Ausbildungsabbrecher* at http://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/veroeffentlichungen_beschluesse/2007/2007_10_18-Handlungsrahmen-Schulabbrecher_01.pdf.

⁽²³⁾ http://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/veroeffentlichungen_beschluesse/2010/2010_03_04-Foerderstrategie-Leistungsschwaechere.pdf

2. Recent policies and measures

The Second Chances for Truants programme (*Schulverweigerung – Die 2. Chance*) offers individual socio-pedagogical support to young people who are at risk of not being able to complete secondary and vocational training as a result of truancy.

Other recent measures related to early leaving are mainly aimed at broadening access to early childhood education and care and establishing channels of communication between childhood education centres, parents and schools to improve the transition to school.

Specific targeted measures for groups at risk are focused on students from socially disadvantaged, migrant and minority/Roma backgrounds.

3. Recent ELVET-specific measures

- Individual apprentices may be granted social, pedagogical, financial and other support at the beginning of training or at any time during training in order to improve successful course completion rates.
- The nationwide training mentors scheme (VerA) of the Senior Expert Service (SES) is a new source of professional, social and personal support to apprentices. Training mentors are retired trained professionals who volunteer and draw on their individual experiences to support apprentices on a one-to-one basis.
- Pre-vocational training measures (*Berufsvorbereitende Maßnahmen – BvB*) are aimed at early leavers and other low qualified youth and migrants. They seek to ensure that all young people who are looking for an apprenticeship contract with a training company but do not succeed in finding one are offered an alternative form of training in which they can get prepared for one. There are three different types of measures: (a) Introductory Training (*Einstiegsqualifizierung – EQJ*) is a placement/internship of 6-12 months that gives an access to work experience in a training company and some training in a VET

school; (b) Vocational Preparation Year (*Berufsvorbereitungsjahr – BVJ*) consists of an additional year of school, as well as work-based learning in an enterprise; (c) Vocational training in non-company establishments (*Berufsausbildung in einer außerbetrieblichen Einrichtung – BaE*) completed in several enterprises. It is offered by social agents together with additional support.

- The career/vocational orientation programme (*Berufsorientierungsprogramme*) targets students in general lower secondary education by initiating a process that enables them to make an informed choice of a suitable VET course. The participants are given an opportunity to participate in an 80-hour work experience course.

Cross-sector cooperation

In Germany, there is a tradition of cooperation between top-level policy areas. The policy areas of employment, youth and social affairs are involved in cooperating on early leaving. The Federal Employment Agency supports schools in the development of the career-choice services and may contribute to the coordination of regional stakeholders in order to improve transition management.

Multi-agency partnerships at local/institutional level are well established, especially for developing individual support plans for poorer performing students. They involve school heads, teachers, guidance specialists, psychologists, social workers, youth workers, therapists, as well as speech and language specialists. Also within schools, the complementarity of competences is used (e.g. team teaching with special needs teachers and subject teachers).

Education and career guidance

Education and career guidance is explicitly considered as a prevention, intervention and compensation measure to tackle early leaving.

A declaration on the design of career guidance was drawn up under the motto 'Career planning is planning for life' (*Berufswegeplanung ist Lebensplanung*), which provides for the development of reliable cooperation between schools, employment agencies, industry and parents, and the active participation of young people. The partners involved in the 'National Pact for Career Training and Skilled Manpower Development in Germany' (*Nationaler Pakt für Ausbildung und Fachkräftenachwuchs in Deutschland*) are the Federal Employment Agency, the Standing Conference of the *Länder* Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs and the Conference of the *Länder* Ministers of Economics.

In order to provide targeted support for young people in their choice of career, German industry's umbrella organisations plan to arrange partnerships with companies for each interested school, help young people gain an insight into working practice, support mentoring and sponsorship programmes to facilitate, in particular, the transition from school to training for disadvantaged young people and support the continuing education of teachers and head teachers through suitable offers from companies.

Education and career guidance is embedded in the curriculum for lower secondary education. Depending on the type of institution, it is either integrated into compulsory subjects or taught as a separate subject (compulsory or not depending on the *Land*). At upper secondary level, guidance is not part of the curriculum but must be provided by school counselling services or through external specialised centres.

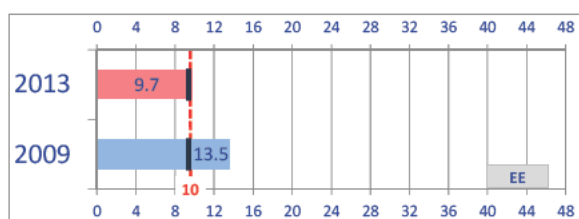
The school staff in charge of education and career guidance are teachers specifically trained in guidance (*Beratungslehrer*). Other professionals also participate such as psychologists.

The 'Education Chains' (*Bildungsketten*) initiative aims at minimising the drop-out ratio by offering support for the transition phase from school to labour market.

As a compensation measure, the Federal Government will extend its support programme for young people who have reached school-leaving age by introducing a legal entitlement in the Employment Promotion Law (*Arbeitsförderungsrecht*) for adolescents and adults to prepare the first leaving certificate for general education at lower secondary level (*Hauptschulabschluss*). The *Länder* will offer qualification schemes for people returning to education to catch up on qualifications.

Estonia

ELET rate and national target



Source: Eurostat (LFS).

Estonia has established a national target of decreasing the rate of early leavers to 9.5 % by 2020.

Definition(s)

Besides the Eurostat definition of early leavers, two other national definitions are used: young people who leave basic education without a certificate, and young people who leave school without obtaining an upper secondary level leaving certificate.

National data collection

Statistics Estonia is in charge of collecting statistical data for the Eurostat Labour Force Survey.

The Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for the Estonian Education Information System's register-based data, validated by each school and aggregated once a year. This source of information is also used by

Statistics Estonia for education statistics, including indicators related to early leaving.

Other indicators related to participation in education are published mainly in the Development Plans issued yearly by the Ministry of Education and Research. The Ministry also publishes statistics on 'drop-out' on their web site ⁽²⁴⁾.

Aggregated data is available both at top-level and school-level.

Strategy, policies and measures

1. Comprehensive strategy

There is no comprehensive strategy for early leaving.

2. Recent policies and measures

There are no specific policies and measures that have been recently adopted to tackle early leaving.

Specific targeted measures to support groups at risk are focused on students from migrant backgrounds and students with special educational needs.

3. Recent ELVET-specific measures

- A training voucher scheme was introduced in 2009 to support re-entry into VET (re-training and continuing training) for unemployed adults, especially the low-skilled ones.
- Guidance and training for students with special educational needs has been developed and delivered for VET teachers so as to reduce high rates of ELVET among this group.
- The KUTSE programme brings former VET early leavers back to vocational training by offering additional places at VET institutions, counselling, career guidance as well as recognition of prior working experience.

⁽²⁴⁾ http://www.hm.ee/ehis/statistilised_tabelid/-alus_vld_oppeasutused_oppurid.xlsx

- An entry to VET has been opened for new groups of learners, including early leavers who have left school without completing compulsory education.

Cross-sector cooperation

Not applicable.

Education and career guidance

Education and career guidance is not explicitly considered as a prevention, intervention and compensation measure to tackle early leaving.

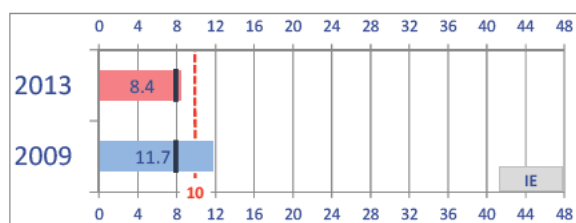
The Estonian National Curricula introduced in 2011 the cross-curricular topic 'Lifelong Learning and Career Planning' in both primary and secondary education. Guidance is also taught as an optional separate subject. School guidance services are available in primary and secondary education.

School staff dealing with guidance are teachers with and without specific training, education and career counsellors, psychologists and social workers.

External counselling services are currently being developed within the *Innove* Foundation.

Ireland

ELET rate and national target



Source: Eurostat (LFS).

Ireland has established a national target of decreasing the rate of early leavers to 8.0 % by 2020.

Definition(s)

Besides the Eurostat definition of early leavers, a national definition is used: children between 6 and 16 years of age or those who have completed 3 years post-primary education – whichever is the latest – who do not regularly attend school.

In addition, the Community Training Centres use the following definitions of early leaving to prioritise access under the YouthReach programme: The first priority group are 16 to 21 year olds who have less than 5 Ds in their *Junior Certificate*; the second priority group are learners who have less than 5 Ds in their *Leaving Certificate*.

National data collection

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) is in charge of collecting statistical data for the Eurostat Labour Force Survey ⁽²⁵⁾.

The Department of Education is responsible for the annual data collection on students' enrolment through the Post Primary Pupil Database ⁽²⁶⁾.

The Educational Welfare Services of the Child Family Agency collects the necessary data for the 'Annual Attendance Returns from School' indicator ⁽²⁷⁾.

These data are collected once a year (except for the CSO data), aggregated at top and regional levels and publicly available.

Strategy, policies and measures

1. Comprehensive strategy

'Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS)' ⁽²⁸⁾, the Action Plan for Educational

⁽²⁵⁾ <http://www.cso.ie/en/qnhsreleasesand-publications/qnhs-specialmodules/>

⁽²⁶⁾ <http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/>

⁽²⁷⁾ <http://www.newb.ie/publications/researchreports.asp>

⁽²⁸⁾ <http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/deis-action-plan-on-educational-inclusion-.pdf>

Inclusion, was launched by the Minister for Education and Science in May 2005 and is the Department's main policy initiative to address educational disadvantage.

The aim of the action plan is to ensure that the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities are prioritised and effectively addressed. Its core elements include an integrated *School Support Programme* (SSP) which brings together and builds upon existing interventions for schools and school clusters/communities with a concentrated level of disadvantage. There are currently 852 schools (658 primary and 194 Post Primary) participating in the DEIS School Support Programme.

The action plan contains the following measures:

- Enhanced allocation of teachers;
- providing a free year of early childhood education and care for children of pre-school age;
- continuing professional development of teachers;
- administrative principals on lower enrolment and staffing figures;
- a new model for allocating additional financial support that takes into account the level of disadvantage and the size of the school;
- literacy and numeracy programmes;
- the *School Meals Programme*, operated by the Department of Social Protection, which provides schools with funding for meals for disadvantaged children;
- alternative curriculum programmes: the *Junior Certificate School Programme* (JCSP), which provides a student-centred approach for young people who show signs of school failure or early leaving and the *Leaving Certificate Applied Programme* (LCA), which aims at preparing students for adult and working life in two years;

- innovation in school planning encompassing targeted improvement plans for attendance, retention in school, and educational progression; literacy, numeracy, and educational attainment; and partnership with parents, support agencies and other educational providers;
- specific interventions: the *Home School Community Liaison* (HSCL), that establishes collaborative schemes between parents and teachers; the *School Completion Programme* (SCP), operated by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, that establishes partnerships between schools, family members and local statutory, community and voluntary agencies and the Educational Welfare Services, operated under the Child and Family Agency, that facilitates integrated working between these different programmes.

A specific budget expenditure of EUR 742.8 million was provided for Educational Disadvantage in 2013 (including *School Meals Programme* expenditure).

2. Recent policies and measures

All the main policies and measures related to early leaving are included in the comprehensive strategy.

Specific targeted measures for groups at risk are focused on students from socially disadvantaged, migrant and minority/Roma backgrounds.

3. Recent ELVET-specific measures

The ELVET specific actions focus on utilising VET and VET pedagogies as a way of attracting early leavers back into learning. For example,

- The *Redundant Apprentices Placement Scheme* (RAPS) was set up to encourage employers to take on apprentices who are made redundant and who otherwise would have had to drop out.
- The *Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme* (VTOS) works with long-term unemployed young people and adults by

preparing them for employment and offering them a second chance to participate in vocational training. The training courses are suitable for persons who have been out of school for some time.

Cross-sector cooperation

The policy areas of employment, youth (Department of Children and Youth Affairs), social affairs (Department of Social Protection) and justice (Department of Justice and Equality) are involved in cooperating on early leaving, but cooperation mechanisms are not yet established.

Multi-agency partnerships at local/institutional level are well-established. The Whole School Guidance Programme⁽²⁹⁾ is developed within each school with the participation of school heads, teachers, guidance specialists, psychologists and pastoral care staff. The support teams within the student support system are another example of this type of cooperation.

Education and career guidance

Education and career guidance is explicitly considered as a prevention, intervention and compensation measure to tackle early leaving.

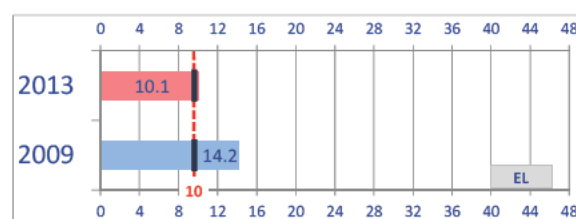
Guidance is not embedded in the curriculum but available to all students in secondary education. Schools have to prepare a whole-school guidance plan, which identifies which age groups should have career guidance lessons or contact time within their academic programme. Individual meetings or small group work with a guidance counsellor are the main methods used at school level.

The staff responsible for education and career guidance are teachers specifically trained in guidance counselling. A school Guidance Handbook containing information and support for guidance provision is made available to schools.

The Adult Educational Guidance Initiative, created to provide quality education guidance services for adults, aims at enhancing employability of young people and assisting them in re-entering education and training.

Greece

ELET rate and national target



Source: Eurostat (LFS)

Greece has established a national target of decreasing the rate of early leavers to 9.7 % by 2020.

Definition(s)

Besides the Eurostat definition of early leavers, the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs uses another definition of early leaving: not having completed compulsory education or other equivalent vocational education or training, as well as the notion of school drop-out.

National data collection

The Hellenic Statistical Authority is in charge of collecting statistical data for the Eurostat Labour Force Survey, aggregated at top, regional and local levels⁽³⁰⁾.

A new information system, 'MySchool'⁽³¹⁾, is operating since the 2013/14 school year for all primary and secondary schools. It is based on a student database and includes fields which are required for the measurement of early leaving. The data, available in an aggregated format at top, regional, prefectural, local and school

⁽²⁹⁾ http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-reports/Well_Being_PP_Schools_Guidelines_Summary.pdf

⁽³⁰⁾ <http://www.statistics.gr>

⁽³¹⁾ <http://myschool.sch.gr>

levels, is collected twice a month and processed twice a year by the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP). The data are not made publicly available for the moment.

The new 'Observatory for the issues of recording and dealing with student drop-out' (*Paratiritirio gia ta themata katagrafis kai antimetopisis tis mathitikis diarrois*), which is an administrative unit of the IEP, is responsible, inter alia, for analysing the data and safeguarding the completeness and reliability of the information collected via 'MySchool'.

The Manpower Employment Organisation's Vocational Education Schools (EPAS) have a student database for monitoring school leavers as of 2014/15 ⁽³²⁾.

Strategy, policies and measures

1. Comprehensive strategy

There is no comprehensive strategy to tackle early leaving.

2. Recent policies and measures

The main policies and measures related to early leaving are:

- setting up education priority zones in regions with low educational attendance and high percentage of early leavers in order to support students at risk;
- positive discrimination of schools aimed at fighting against school failure and drop-out of foreign repatriated and Roma students, as well as students from the Muslim minority. This includes training and support of teachers, in-school supportive interventions and coordination of school networks. Also, special curriculum arrangements are set up: in areas with high density of migrant, repatriated or Roma population; 'cross-cultural schools' adapt the curriculum to the specific educational, social and cultural needs of students, with the teaching of the instruction language as a key priority;

'minority schools', that are bilingual Greek-Turkish, operate at Thrace, in areas with a population from the Muslim minority;

- supplementary income benefits are available for families with low income having children in compulsory education;
- introducing the All Day Primary School, with an extended timetable (in addition to the compulsory one) and extra activities (study, arts and cultural activities, English, a second foreign language and ICT);
- increasing the flexibility and permeability of educational pathways, such as all-day pre-primary and primary schools, evening lower secondary schools and vocational upper secondary schools to help students at work attending classes, and initial vocational training for those who do not want to continue in general education;
- improving the quality and prestige of vocational education and training by offering two cycles of study: secondary and post-secondary (the so called 'apprenticeship class');
- language support for children with a different mother tongue through programmes such as 'ODYSSEAS – Education of immigrants in the Greek language, history and culture';
- identification of groups at risk of early leaving and development of early warning systems, particularly for students with special educational needs;
- setting up the 'Observatory for the Prevention of School Violence and Bullying'.

Specific targeted measures for groups at risk are focused on students from socially disadvantaged, migrant and minority/Roma backgrounds.

3. Recent ELVET-specific measures

The dual system has been significantly expanded and upgraded recently and this reform is expected to have a positive impact on ELVET rates. The 2013 reform of secondary education (Law 4186/2013) introduced a new,

⁽³²⁾ <http://mathitia.oaed.gr>

optional fourth year of VET training which takes place in form of apprenticeship training. This additional year of apprenticeship training leads to a higher level VET qualification (EQF5) which is expected to be attractive to both employers and learners alike. The reform also improves the system to recognise prior learning, thereby in particular benefiting early leavers who are returning to VET with relevant work experience.

Financial incentives are also utilised to encourage participation and retention in VET. For example, young people aged 18-25 can obtain financial support to remain in initial VET and unemployed and low qualified youth are attracted back into learning through financial incentives to take up work-based learning and other VET courses.

Cross-sector cooperation

Cooperation on early leaving is being tested within projects. It involves the policy areas of employment, youth, social affairs, justice and health.

Concerning multi-agency partnerships at local/institutional level, professionals are involved (school heads, teachers, guidance specialists, psychologists, social workers, as well as speech and language specialists) but partnership practice is not yet well established.

Education and career guidance

Education and career guidance is explicitly considered as a prevention, intervention and compensation measure to tackle early leaving.

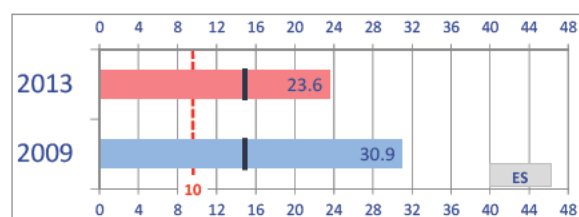
Educational and career guidance is part of the lower secondary education curriculum as a compulsory separate subject ('School Career Guidance'). Moreover, since September 2011, 1st and 2nd years students in upper secondary education have the opportunity to be informed and deal with issues related to education and career guidance within a separate subject ('Project').

The school staff in charge of guidance are both specifically and non-specifically trained teachers.

Career guidance is also provided outside schools by Counselling and Guidance Centres (KESYP). Digital tools on career guidance are available through the National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP), which belongs to the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. These are, for instance, an interactive web portal for career counselling of young people, a national database of educational opportunities and a vocational orientation test and basic skills self-assessment.

Spain

ELET rate and national target



Source: Eurostat (LFS).

Spain has established a national target of decreasing the rate of early leavers to 15.0 % by 2020. Spain also aims to reduce the rate of early leavers to 23.0 % by 2015.

Definition(s)

Besides the Eurostat definition of early leavers, a national definition for early leaving is used: young people between 18 and 24 years of age who have not completed upper secondary education and are no longer in education and training.

National data collection

The National Institute for Statistics is in charge of collecting the statistical data for the Eurostat Labour Force Survey.

The Autonomous Communities annually collect data and provide them to the Sub-Directorate General for Statistics and Studies in the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport. The data are aggregated once a year at top-level (State and Autonomous Communities) and made available once a year in several publications on the Ministry website⁽³³⁾:

- 'Facts and Figures' (*Datos y cifras*): annual report published by the Sub-Directorate General for Statistics and Studies;
- 'Data on Education in Spain' (*Las cifras de la educación en España*), also produced by the Sub-Directorate General for Statistics and Studies. It includes data on students enrolment;
- 'State system of education indicators' (*Sistema estatal de indicadores de la educación*), which is published by the National Institute for Educational Assessment (INEE) and includes an indicator on early leavers.

Strategy, policies and measures

1. Comprehensive strategy

The national policy framework for education policies aiming at the reduction of early leaving is the 2006 Organic Act on Education and the new Organic Act for the Improvement of the Quality of Education (*Ley Orgánica para la Mejora de la Calidad Educativa* – LOMCE, 9 December 2013).

In 2008 the Ministry of Education and the Education Administrations of the Autonomous Communities agreed on the 'Plan to Reduce Early School Leaving' (*Plan para la reducción del abandono escolar*)⁽³⁴⁾. This document, containing measure proposals and recommendations, established the general strategy for tackling early leaving in Spain.

⁽³³⁾ <http://www.mecd.gob.es/servicios-al-ciudadano-mecd/estadisticas/educacion/indicadores-publicaciones-sintesis.html>

⁽³⁴⁾ http://www.fapar.org/comunicados_documentos-/ABANDONO_ESCOLAR_PREMATURO_Espana_2008.pdf

- The specific measures implemented by the Autonomous Communities, with the collaboration of the Ministry of Education, make up the 'Programme to Reduce Early School Leaving in Education and Training' (*Programa para la reducción del abandono temprano de la educación y la formación*)⁽³⁵⁾. The Programme does not cover all existing actions and types of collaboration between the Ministry and the Autonomous Communities. Due to decentralisation, the measures may differ in each Autonomous Community. Each of them takes into account the specific educational, social and economic circumstances having a greater influence on early leaving within their territory. However, successful measures are widely spread among Autonomous Communities. The measures being carried out in the framework of this programme, and more recently within the framework of the LOMCE, concern prevention, intervention and compensation aspects.

Some of the most significant actions are:

- assigning monitoring duties related to early leaving actions to the Sectoral Committee for Education (the inter-governmental coordination body that gathers the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports and the regional ministries of education);
- specific programmes targeting particularly disadvantaged areas or groups of students (immigrants, ethnic minorities) experiencing higher early leaving rates, fostering cooperation and coordination with different bodies and local and regional authorities;
- 'Curricular diversification programmes', 'Initial Professional Qualification Programme' (PCPI) (see below) and other measures that offer routes to re-enter the education and training system, such as special examinations to access vocational training cycles;

⁽³⁵⁾ <http://www.mecd.gob.es/educacion-mecd/areas-educacion/comunidades-autonomas/programas-cooperacion/programa-abandono.html>

- 'Programme for the Recognition of Professional Competences' promoting the use of validation of non-formal learning by the competent authorities;
- developing teacher training programmes and support resources for teachers and other professionals working with low-achievers and students at risk of early leaving;
- implementing individual support measures (e.g. extra lessons to help obtaining the lower secondary education certificate);
- specific actions in schools to identify students at risk of early leaving and measures to support the academic success of these students, reinforcing the actions of the School Counselling Departments, academic support and monitoring programmes;
- guidance and monitoring of early leavers and alternative education provision to help them re-enter the education system;
- improving the collection and processing of early leaving information to enable early warning and absenteeism management systems;
- facilitating studying while being at work (development of distance and semi-attendance training);
- strengthening relations between educational institutions and the working environment to enhance collaboration with local companies.

From 2007 to 2012, the total budget for the Spanish early leaving strategy was EUR 375 236 401 and covered all the actions carried out until 31 December 2013. Until 2010, the strategy was co-financed by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport and the Autonomous Communities. Since 2011, it is fully funded by the Ministry.

The new Organic Act for the Improvement of the Quality of Education (LOMCE), approved in December 2013, acknowledges the high rate of early leaving as one of the main drivers for this

reform and ensures continuity of the measures included in the 'Programme to Reduce Early School Leaving in Education and Training'. It proposes reforms aiming at improving the quality of education, reducing early leaving and increasing the rate of young people reaching post-compulsory education. It emphasises the implementation of a more flexible education system, the modernisation of VET in line with the labour market needs, more autonomy to schools and setting the choice of educational pathways a year ahead of the transition.

2. Recent policies and measures

The 2013-2016 Strategy for Entrepreneurship and Youth Employment (*Estrategia de Emprendimiento y Empleo Joven*)⁽³⁶⁾ also states the reduction of early leaving as one of its main objectives. It includes measures such as financial aids for early leavers to return to education and get a lower secondary education certificate and the extension of dual vocational training. The overall budget for this strategy is EUR 3 485 millions financed from the European Social Fund, the Ministry of Employment and the State budget.

Specific targeted measures for groups at risk are focused on students from socially disadvantaged, migrant and minority/Roma backgrounds, as well as students with behavioural problems, emotional disorders, lack of motivation or difficulties in adjusting to the education system.

3. Recent ELVET-specific measures

- Initial Vocational Qualification Programmes (*Programas de Cualificación Profesional Inicial – PCPI*) were set up to attract young people without lower secondary education back into education through kinetic and professional oriented courses, tailored to their individual needs.
- Second chance schools and other reintegration programmes make use of VET

⁽³⁶⁾ http://www.empleo.gob.es/ficheros/garantiajuvenil/documentos/EEEJ_Documento.pdf

and VET pedagogies as a way of attracting early leavers back into training.

- Recent legal changes opened up an opportunity for young people who do not meet the standard academic requirements to access intermediate and advanced level VET studies.

Cross-sector cooperation

Cooperation mechanisms are being developed, but some are already well-established. The policy areas involved at top-level (State and/or Autonomous Communities) are employment, social affairs, justice, youth and family. Policy areas such as women, immigration and public safety may be involved in some Autonomous Communities.

Coordination as well as monitoring and evaluation of early leaving measures are ensured by the Sectoral Committee for Education, where the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, as well as the education administrations of the Autonomous Communities are represented.

In each Autonomous Community, the involvement of the above mentioned sectors depends on the measures and agreements in place. Each of them establish at their level collaboration frameworks between different education stakeholders, including employment departments, foundations, municipalities, trade unions, universities, health services, etc.

Multi-agency partnerships at local/institutional level are both a legal obligation and a well-established practice. They may involve school heads, teachers, guidance specialists, psychologists, social workers, youth workers, inspectors, trainers and social mediators/ educators. Partnerships with professionals external to the school depend on the agreements established by each Autonomous Community.

Education and career guidance

Education and career guidance is explicitly considered as a prevention, intervention and compensation measure to tackle early leaving.

The aspects of guidance to be covered in primary and secondary education are embedded in each Autonomous Community's legislation and implementation is up to the schools. Therefore, the situation varies greatly. Each school needs to implement tutorial and guidance actions with the involvement of all the teaching staff and under the supervision of the Guidance Teams/Departments. Guidance is also provided by school counselling services in primary and secondary education.

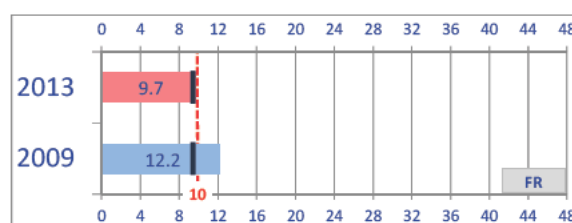
The school staff in charge of guidance are teachers with and without specific training, and social workers/pedagogues.

External services may also provide guidance: Educational and Psycho-Pedagogical Guidance Teams (only for primary students); Early Care Teams and Specific Teams (for both primary and secondary students).

Education and career guidance compensation measures include, among others, collaboration agreements with other institutions, guidance units for monitoring and supporting out-of-school young people, telematics instruments and reference web portals. The Autonomous Communities also implement projects concerning this area.

France

ELET rate and national target



Source: Eurostat (LFS).

Note: Break in time series in 2013.

France has established a national target of decreasing the rate of early leavers to 9.5 % by 2020.

The President also committed to halve the number of students who leave education each

year without a secondary education qualification. This represents currently 16 % (135 000) of all school leavers per year.

Definition(s)

Besides the Eurostat definition of early leavers, two national definitions are used: a) 'non graduate leavers': students who leave education without having obtained an upper secondary qualification and b) 'drop-outs': students who leave education before completing a programme they were attending below upper secondary education (the non-completion of programmes leading to upper secondary level and the non-completion of upper secondary programmes followed after completion of a first programme at the same level are also taken into account in this definition).

National data collection

The national statistics office (INSEE) is in charge of collecting statistical data for the Eurostat Labour Force Survey. The data collection is only aggregated at top level.

INSEE also publishes statistics on early leavers, aggregated at top, regional and local levels based on the population census ⁽³⁷⁾.

The Directorate for Evaluation, Perspective and Performance of the Ministry of Education produces one indicator on 'non graduate leavers' over the three last years based on the INSEE Labour Force Survey. This information, collected on a regular basis, is aggregated at top level and published each year, together with the LFS indicator on early leavers ⁽³⁸⁾. The full data collection is only available for research purposes (year n^{-1}).

⁽³⁷⁾ http://www.insee.fr/fr/themes/tableau_local.asp?ref-id=FOR2&millesime=2010&niveau=1&typgeo=FE&cdgeo=1

⁽³⁸⁾ See Chapter 8 (especially 8.23 and 8.30) in *Repères et références statistiques sur les enseignements, la formation et la recherche* at <http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid57096/reperes-et-references-statistiques.html>.

The inter-ministerial system for information exchange (SIEI) is a tool that does not aim to produce statistics on early leaving or any measurement of it but enables identifying and contacting early leavers at local level in order to offer them solutions. It is managed by the General Directorate for School Education in the Ministry of Education. Data is collected twice a year, aggregated at national, regional, local and institutional level. This data is confidential and only available to people designated by the prefect of department.

Strategy, policies and measures

1. Comprehensive strategy

There is no comprehensive strategy to tackle early leaving.

2. Recent policies and measures

The main policies and measures related to early leaving are:

- preventing school drop-out of young people with socially disadvantaged backgrounds ⁽³⁹⁾ via different measures:
 - fostering pre-primary education enrolment of children from the age of 2 with priority given to children from socially disadvantaged areas;
 - providing one more teacher per school, support for home work and offering sport, artistic and cultural activities in disadvantaged areas;
- ensuring adequate orientation of students, especially in vocational education (individual guidance discussion with the reference teacher in the first year of vocational education) and the possibility to test other types of trainings (*stages passerelles*) for upper secondary students wishing to change their

⁽³⁹⁾ See also the information page on Priority Education ([http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid187/l-education-prioritaire.html#Les constats du diagnostic réalisé dans le cadre de la modernisation de l'action publique \(MAP\)](http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid187/l-education-prioritaire.html#Les%20constats%20du%20diagnostic%20r%C3%A9alis%C3%A9%20dans%20le%20cadre%20de%20la%20modernisation%20de%20l'action%20publique%20(MAP))) and the evaluation report on Priority Education policy at <http://www.modernisation.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/fichiers-attaches/4-educationprioritaire/rapport-diagnostic.pdf>.

orientation). Some experimentations also exist for allowing the family (instead of the pedagogical team) to decide on the orientation of the student at the end of lower secondary education;

- fighting against absenteeism (cooperation with parents, social services, reference person for young students who are often absent);
- specific structures (*Missions de lutte contre le décrochage scolaire* – MLDS) in charge of identifying young people who dropped out of school via the SIEI and offering them training, remediation or access to qualification options. They also aim at counselling pedagogical teams on early leaving;
- the Training, Qualification, Employment networks (*Formation Qualification Emploi* – FOQUALE), which aim at getting back into training young people who left the education system without a diploma ⁽⁴⁰⁾.

Specific targeted measures for groups at risk are focused on students from socially disadvantaged background.

3. Recent ELVET-specific measures

- The FOQUALE networks (see above) coordinate the local services involved in supporting VET students who show signs of wanting to leave their studies prematurely. VET schools with high rates of early leaving appoint a person to coordinate school specific actions and liaise with parents.
- The 'Future Job Contracts' (*contrats emplois d'avenir*) are a second chance opportunity of training and work experience for young people with few or no qualifications. The competences acquired on the job will be assessed and certified, increasing the qualification levels of participants.
- Second chance schools (*Écoles de la deuxième chance* – E2C) offer early leavers the opportunity to undertake school-based

vocational training or apprenticeship training that direct them towards a VET qualification. The government intends to expand the current network of second chance schools.

Cross-sector cooperation

Policy cooperation to fight early leaving exists. It involves the policy areas of employment, youth, social affairs and justice under the coordination of the government.

Concerning compensation measures, an interdepartmental policy approach has recently been adopted supporting cooperation between the education, youth and employment areas.

Since 2011, multi-agency partnerships at local/institutional level have been developed within the local 'Platforms for follow-up and support to early leavers' (*plates-formes de suivi et d'appui aux décrocheurs*). They are networks between schools, regional and local education services, professional insertion services (*Missions locales pour l'insertion des jeunes*), social services, employers, etc. These platforms are legally in charge of data collection, coordination and collaboration to support early leavers at local level.

Multi-agency partnerships at local/institutional level are well established and involve professionals such as school heads, teachers, guidance specialists, psychologists, social workers, youth workers, as well as speech and language specialists. Therapists and nurses may also be involved in projects. Multi-agency partnerships also exist within projects, especially within the Programmes for Educational Success (*programmes de réussite éducative*) and specific pilot projects ('social experimentations' financed by the experimentation fund on youth). One of the project's main objectives is to create a local network of stakeholders (around 20 stakeholders from different institutions and professions) to efficiently and comprehensively address early leaving.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ http://www.education.gouv.fr/pid25535/bulletin_officiel.html?cid_bo=71326.

Education and career guidance

Education and career guidance is explicitly considered as a prevention, intervention and compensation measure to tackle early leaving.

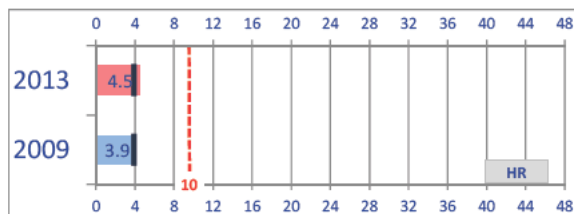
Guidance is not embedded in the curriculum but schools are obliged to provide it through guidance services mainly in secondary education. The school staff in charge of providing guidance to students are teachers without specific training and guidance counsellors.

The Information and Orientation Centres (*Centres d'information et d'orientation – CIO*) also intervene at school with education/career counsellors (trained as psychologists).

Most compensation measures are related to career guidance and are carried out locally through the *Missions locales pour l'insertion des jeunes*.

Croatia

ELET rate and national target



Source: Eurostat (LFS).

Croatia has established a national target of maintaining the rate of early leavers below 4 % by 2020.

Definition(s)

Early leaving is not officially defined. However, in documents published in Croatia (research papers, media reports, etc.) the focus is mainly on not entering or not completing upper secondary education.

National data collection

The EU Labour Force Survey, collected by the Croatian Bureau of Statistics, is the only data collection used for early leaving.

A national electronic database, tracking students through their educational and vocational pathways, also exists but is currently not used in the context of early leaving.

As stated in the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan, a tracking system for young people not in education, employment and training will be set up by the Ministry of Labour and Pension System by March 2015. It will include a systematic analysis of school drop-outs who do not register with the public employment service.

Strategy, policies and measures

1. Comprehensive strategy

There is no comprehensive strategy to tackle early leaving.

2. Recent policies and measures

No recent policies or measures exist for tackling early leaving.

Specific targeted measures for groups at risk of early leaving are focused on students from socially disadvantaged and minority/Roma backgrounds.

3. Recent ELVET-specific measures

No ELVET specific measures have been identified. However, individual VET providers employ school pedagogues who provide support, guidance and counselling to students at risk of ELVET and their parents.

Cross-sector cooperation

Not applicable.

Education and career guidance

Education and career guidance is not explicitly considered as a prevention, intervention and compensation measure to tackle early leaving.

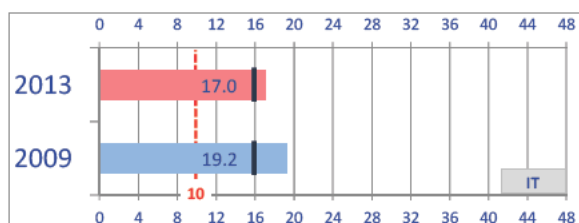
The existing National Framework Curriculum (officially adopted in July 2010), covers education and career guidance within the mandatory cross-curricular entrepreneurship education. However, the corresponding teaching plans are still to be developed and implemented.

Currently education and career guidance is not embedded in the curriculum. It is provided by school guidance services in lower secondary education. School staff responsible for guidance are psychologists, social workers and social pedagogues.

The Centres for information and advice on career (*Centar za informiranje i savjetovanje o karijeri*) may also provide external guidance services to primary and secondary students.

Italy

ELET rate and national target



Source: Eurostat (LFS).

Italy has established a national target of decreasing the rate of early leavers to 16 % by 2020.

Definition(s)

Besides the Eurostat definition of early leavers, the concept of 'at-risk of drop-out' is also used, i.e. students who leave school education during the academic year not providing any official communication to the school.

National data collection

The National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) is in charge of collecting statistical data for the Eurostat Labour Force Survey.

Data on students at risk of drop-out is collected on an on-going basis through the student register by the statistical office of the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR). This data refers to students in school education (general and vocational/technical schools). It is made available each year⁽⁴¹⁾, aggregated at top, regional, local and institutional level.

An agreement between MIUR and the State/Region Conference is being prepared for the integration of the national student register to the regional registers, which contain data on vocational education, training pathways and apprenticeship. The integration of registers will allow distinguishing early leaving from a mere shift from the school system to the regional vocational training system.

Strategy, policies and measures

1. Comprehensive strategy

There is no comprehensive strategy to tackle early leaving. However, the Ministry of Education, University and Research is currently working on merging in a single framework all structural measures already implemented to tackle early leaving. This plan is expected to be ready still in 2014.

2. Recent policies and measures

The main measures and policies related to early leaving are:

- a series of intervention and economic measures aimed at fighting drop-out, such as integrative teaching in compulsory education in the areas with higher risk of drop-out and the extension of school timetable for groups of students;
- implementing extra-curricular activities in the afternoon (sportive, cultural, artistic and leisure activities);
- increasing flexibility and permeability of the education system through the full integration

⁽⁴¹⁾ http://hubmiur.pubblica.istruzione.it/alfresco/d/d/workspace/SpacesStore/9b568f0d-8823-40ff-9263-faab1ae4f5a3/Focus_dispersione_scolastica_5.pdf

and recognition of non-formal and informal pathways within the education system;

- Setting up local networks of guidance in each Regional School Office aiming at training teachers, promoting lifelong learning guidance and identifying needs, with the participation of the different actors involved in guidance;
- developing the students' register to identify early leavers;
- reorganising the adult education system. Former centres and evening classes will merge into the new Centres for Adult Education (CPIA) providing young people and adults with personalised learning paths for obtaining lower and upper secondary education qualifications. Centres will also offer literacy courses and Italian language courses to foreign adults;
- integrating classes in institutes for the detention of minors and adults.

Specific targeted measures for groups at risk are focused on students from socially disadvantaged, migrants and minority/Roma backgrounds, as well as on students with special educational needs.

3. Recent ELVET-specific measures

There are no national ELVET specific measures; the national preventive, guidance and second chance measures related to ELVET tend to have broader target groups or goals.

However, some regional ELVET specific measures exist:

- some regional flexible initial VET programmes include skills-based catch up workshops and offer additional counselling and psychological services for at risk students;
- forming networks of schools is encouraged. Such networks are incentivised to undertake ELVET actions together in order to facilitate a comprehensive approach with less overlap;

- expansion of dual training opportunities and improving permeability of VET tracks are seen as critical to the ELVET agenda.

Cross-sector cooperation

There is a tradition of cooperation on early leaving between the policy areas of employment (the Ministry of Labour), youth, family, justice and health.

A Forum for lifelong guidance has been established within the Ministry of Education, University and Research. The other members of this Forum are the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Health, the State/Region conference, the Institute for Professional Development of Workers (ISFOL), the Italian Manufacturers' Association (Confindustria), the Union of Chambers of Commerce (Unioncamere) and some experts from universities. This Forum has recently been merged into a steering committee, set up within the State/Regions Conference, which has established coordination and cooperation mechanisms for lifelong guidance among the various stakeholders.

Concerning multi-agency partnerships at local/institutional level, school heads and teachers are involved in well-established partnership practices, while psychologists, social and youth workers, therapists and speech and language specialists cooperate within projects.

Education and career guidance

Education and career guidance is explicitly considered as a prevention, intervention and compensation measure to tackle early leaving.

Education and career guidance is embedded in the primary and secondary curricula as a cross-curricular topic. School counselling and information services are in charge of guidance provision in secondary education.

School staff responsible for education and career guidance are teachers without specific training. However, the Ministry of Education organises CPD activities for selected groups of qualified teachers and school heads, who, once trained, will be engaged with the training of all

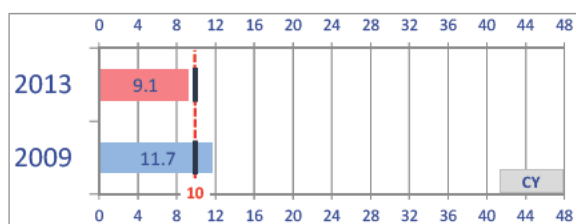
other teachers within their respective Region. The National Plan for Guidance envisages the development of teacher's specialisation courses in guidance with qualification at Master's level.

Education and career guidance is also provided out of school in the consulting and/or information centres (e.g.: *Informagiovani*), in provincial job centres, regional consulting and information centres, guidance centres at universities and upper secondary schools.

Compensatory measures include guidance and support to those who wish to re-enter education. Local measures are provided by school teachers in Adult Education Centres, Provincial Job Centres, associations and private organisations.

Cyprus

ELET rate and national target



Source: Eurostat (LFS).

Cyprus has already reached the national target of reducing the rate of early leavers to 10 % by 2020. No new target has been set for the moment.

Definition(s)

Cyprus uses the Eurostat definition of early leavers.

National data collection

The Cyprus Statistical Service is in charge of collecting statistical data for the Eurostat Labour Force Survey. The LFS data collection is presented in an aggregated format at top level and is publicly available⁽⁴²⁾.

⁽⁴²⁾ http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cvstat/statistics.nsf/labour_31main_en/labour_31main_en?OpenForm&sub=1&sel

Strategy, policies and measures

1. Comprehensive strategy

There is no comprehensive strategy to tackle early leaving.

2. Recent policies and measures

The main measures and policies related to early leaving are:

- improving the quality of pre-primary education through a new national curriculum and the revision of the timetable;
- applying measures of positive discrimination by establishing Zones of Educational Priority. From January 2015 these measures, originally applied to 42 schools based on socio-economic characteristics of their population, should be extended to reach any interested school;
- increasing the flexibility and permeability of educational pathways through reforms in the VET system;
- offering career guidance services, including psychological support;
- providing support for low achievers (student tutoring and mentoring programmes);
- providing support in the instruction language, reception classes and special induction programmes for migrant students;
- identifying groups at risk of early leaving based on early identification of literacy problems;
- the New Modern Apprenticeship Programme⁽⁴³⁾ aims at providing a viable, alternative form of training and development for young people between 14-25 years of age, while meeting labour market needs.

Specific targeted measures for groups at risk are focused on students from socially disadvantaged, migrant and minority/Roma backgrounds.

⁼²

⁽⁴³⁾ http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/kepa/kepa_new.nsf/-kepa21_en/kepa21_en?OpenDocument

3. Recent ELVET-specific measures

No ELVET specific measures have been identified but VET plays an important part in the reform of the second chance system and other examples of ELVET relevant initiatives include the following:

- A new evening technical school (*Esperines technikes scholes*) has been established in order to promote participation in secondary technical and vocational education and to combat early leaving (the first one was established in Nicosia in 1999 and the second one in Limassol in 2012).
- Additional places are made available for VET students at tertiary educational institutions as a way of encouraging participation and retention in VET.

Cross-sector cooperation

The policy areas of employment, social affairs and health are involved in the cooperation on tackling early leaving, but cooperation mechanisms have not yet been established.

Multi-agency partnerships at local/institutional level are well established and involve both psychologists and guidance specialists. School heads, teachers, social workers, therapists, speech and language specialists, as well as other necessary specialised staff to help students with specific problems may also be associated within projects. Youth workers may also be involved.

Education and career guidance

Education and career guidance is explicitly considered as a prevention and intervention measure developed to tackle early leaving but not as a compensation measure.

In lower secondary education, career guidance is taught as a compulsory separate subject ('Career Education').

In upper secondary education, guidance is not embedded in the curriculum. However, career counsellors from the Career Counselling and Educational Service (CCES) are missioned to

intervene in secondary schools, organising individual interviews and group seminars in the class.

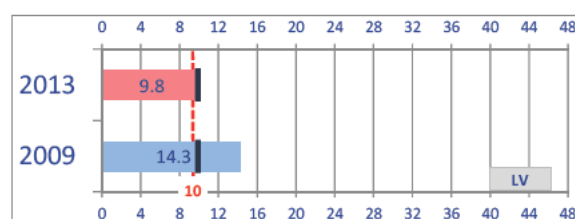
The school staff responsible for education and career guidance activities are required to have specialised post-graduate certificate on this topic. In addition, the Ministry of Education organises trainings in specialised seminars during the year.

Education and career guidance is also provided through the Cyprus Youth Board in collaboration with the CCES for students at least 16 years of age.

In March 2012, Cyprus created the National Lifelong Guidance Forum within the National Agency for Lifelong Learning, which will act as a national platform on lifelong guidance. It will coordinate the work of the agencies that provide guidance, establish a national quality system on guidance, promote research on the topic and also act as the representation of Cyprus in European and international forums on lifelong guidance. The main stakeholders represented in the Forum are the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance, the Human Resource Development Authority, the Youth Board of Cyprus, higher education institutions, and other social partners.

Latvia

ELET rate and national target



Source: Eurostat (LFS).

Latvia has reached the national target of reducing the rate of early leavers to 10 % by 2020.

Definition(s)

The Eurostat definition of early leavers is used.

National data collection

The Central Statistical Bureau Data is in charge of collecting statistical data for the Eurostat Labour Force Survey.

Local authorities gather information on absenteeism through a student register and transfer it quarterly to the State Education Information System.

Both data collections are aggregated at top level and publicly available ⁽⁴⁴⁾ ⁽⁴⁵⁾.

Strategy, policies and measures

1. Comprehensive strategy

There is no comprehensive strategy to tackle early leaving.

2. Recent policies and measures

The main measures and policies related to early leaving are:

- reducing grade retention by providing mandatory support for low achievers;
- improving the follow up of absenteeism through the development of the State Education Information System. Local authorities must report to the Ministry of Education.
- setting a regulation stipulating the procedures that education institutions should follow to signal absenteeism to parents, local or public institutions;
- supporting young people not in education, training or employment by providing them with education and career guidance and supervising them to ensure that they receive

the necessary support to avoid dropping out of the youth guarantee programme;

- implementing measures to identify early leavers and help them re-enter education and training within the Youth guarantee scheme.

Specific targeted measures for groups at risk are focused on students from socially disadvantaged and minority/Roma backgrounds as well as students with special educational needs.

3. Recent ELVET-specific measures

No ELVET specific actions but VET is widely used by the public employment service and other stakeholders as part of second chance and active labour market measures that target early leavers.

Cross-sector cooperation

Cooperation mechanisms are being tested with the policy areas of employment and social affairs within European Structural Funds (ESF) projects.

Multi-agency partnerships at local/institutional level are also tested in around 50 ESF projects addressing early leaving, in which partnerships between different types of professional is an essential feature. The composition of the partnership varies from project to project and may include school heads, teachers, guidance specialists, psychologists, social workers, youth workers, therapists and/or speech and language specialists.

Early leaving is also one of the many issues addressed by the national guidance forum, a discussion platform including several ministries and social partner representatives.

Education and career guidance

Education and career guidance is not explicitly considered as a prevention and intervention measure to tackle early leaving but it is considered as a compensation measure within the youth guarantee scheme.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ <http://www.csb.gov.lv/en/statistikas-temas/-metodologija/employment-and-unemployment-37087.html>

⁽⁴⁵⁾ <http://www.ikvd.gov.lv/izglitiba-iestades-neregistro-bernu-skaitu-pieaug.html>

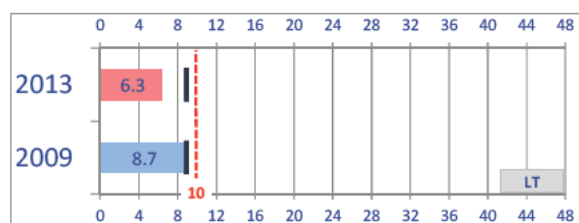
Career guidance is integrated into several compulsory subjects in both the primary and secondary curricula⁽⁴⁶⁾. Schools may also have specific career counselling services.

The school staff dealing with education and career guidance are teachers specifically trained or not, education and career counsellors, psychologists, social workers, pedagogues and staff responsible for extra-curricular activities.

Guidance is also provided externally by the Youth Centres and, for young people as of 15 of age, by the State Employment Agency.

Lithuania

ELET rate and national target



Source: Eurostat (LFS).

Lithuania has established a national target of maintaining the rate of early leavers to less than 9 % by 2020. Furthermore, a national target has been set up in the recently approved National Education Strategy 2013-2022⁽⁴⁷⁾: maintaining the early leaving rate below 8 % by 2022.

Definition(s)

Early leaving is not officially defined but other similar concepts are used: a) 'not-learning child': a child under 16 years not registered in the student register; b) 'not-attending child': a child included in the student register but who has

missed, during a month, more than half of the lessons prescribed by the compulsory school curriculum without due justification.

National data collection

The National Statistics office is responsible for the statistical data collection for the Eurostat Labour Force Survey. Data is aggregated at top level and made publicly available annually⁽⁴⁸⁾.

The Centre of Information Technologies in Education is responsible for collecting data through the student database 'Education Information Management System' on a continuous basis. The data are aggregated annually at top⁽⁴⁹⁾, regional⁽⁵⁰⁾ and local⁽⁵¹⁾ levels and are publicly available. Data at institutional level is not publicly available (only for registered persons).

Strategy, policies and measures

1. Comprehensive strategy

Lithuania does not have a comprehensive strategy to tackle early leaving.

2. Recent policies and measures

The main measures and policies related to early leaving are:

- increasing the number of children in early childhood education and care (ECEC) as of the age of 4, possible mandatory ECEC attendance for children socially at risk, providing quality ECEC via the 'Development of kindergarten and pre-school education' project (2012-2015) (*Ikimokyklinio ir priešmokyklinio ugdymo*

⁽⁴⁶⁾ In primary education: 'Home Economics and Technologies'; 'Social Sciences'; 'Natural Sciences'; in lower secondary education: 'Home Economics and Technologies'; 'Social Sciences'; 'Physics'; in upper secondary education: 'Domestic Sciences'; 'Physics'.

⁽⁴⁷⁾ http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc?p_id=463390&p_tr2=2

⁽⁴⁸⁾ http://osp.stat.gov.lt/viesos-duomenu-rinkmenos/-/asset_publisher/i2LnhXkrXAbI/content/ketvirtinio-gyventoju-uzimtumo-statistinio-tyrimo-?redirect=-http%3A%2F%2Fosp.stat.gov.lt%2Fviesos-duomenu-rinkmenos%3Fp_p_id%3D101_INSTANCE_i2LnhXkrXAbI%26p_p_lifecycle%3D0%26p_p_state%3Dnormal%26p_p_mode%3Dview%26p_p_col_id%3Dcolumn-1%26p_p_col_pos%3D3%26p_p_col_count%3D5

⁽⁴⁹⁾ <http://svis.emokykla.lt/lt/index/wpage#>

⁽⁵⁰⁾ See Table 4 (*Nesimokantys vaikai*) at http://svis.emokykla.lt/lt/index/a_view/43.

⁽⁵¹⁾ http://svis.emokykla.lt/lt/index/wpage_view/39

- plėtra*)⁽⁵²⁾. This project is supplemented by the 'Promotion of Cohesion' Programme (2007-2013), which aims at a) investing in pre-primary education by updating the curriculum and improving school conditions and b) creating equal opportunities for young children in rural areas through the creation of 'Universal Multifunction Centres in Rural Areas' (*Universalių daugiafunkcinių centrų kaimo vietovėse steigimas*) for educational and social services within the vicinities;
- enabling schools to provide short- or long-term learning assistance for students with difficulties as an extra-curricular activity through individual or group counselling;
 - two projects have been developed to increase the flexibility and permeability of educational pathways:
 - 'Providing Wider Possibilities for Choosing a Learning Pathway for Students aged 14-19, Phase II: Deeper Learning Differentiation and Individualisation for Ensuring Education Quality demanded by the Modern Labour World'⁽⁵³⁾. This project aims at providing wider possibilities to students aged 14-19 by individualising and differentiating the curriculum, increasing its attractiveness, and adjusting it to the labour market needs for the development of professional competencies.
 - 'Alternative Education in Education System' (*Alternatyvus ugdymas švietimo sistemoje*). This project aims at creating the conditions to facilitate acquisition of basic education for more students as well as increasing the number of students that continue their education or training after secondary education.
 - supporting low achievers through individual learning plans and educational assistance for students with special educational needs;
 - providing language support for children with a different mother tongue. Teaching in ethnic minorities' languages is also provided in some schools;
 - establishing a procedure for the identification of groups at risk of early leaving with the participation of municipalities, school staff, parents and, if needed, the Child Welfare Commission;
 - developing the 'National Information System on Children's Absenteeism and Pupils' Truancy' (*Nesimokančių vaikų ir mokyklos nelankančių mokinių informacinė sistema*) as an early warning system for students at risk of early leaving;
 - networking with parents and other actors outside school through projects such as 'Harmonic Family and Sustainable School Community – The Future of Lithuania' (*Darni šeima ir tvari mokyklos bendruomenė – Lietuvos ateitis*) in order to promote active involvement of parents in educational activities;
 - identifying school drop-outs and supporting them to re-enter education at the so-called 'Youth Schools' (*jaunimo mokyklos*), that offer one or two-year schooling for students with learning motivation or social problems. The course may lead to re-entering mainstream education and training.
 - the 'Trust Yourself' project (*Pasitikėk savimi*), which aims at increasing students' motivation to return to education or to employment. Target groups are persons aged 16-25 years old, who do not have any qualification, do not work or learn and do not participate in the active labour market. Persons below 21 years of age are sent back to education. The authority responsible for developing and implementing the project is the Lithuanian Employment Services in the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. Other bodies are involved such as the Department of Youth Affairs (same ministry), 10 regional public employment services and 11 NGOs. The budget is about EUR 1.2 million.

⁽⁵²⁾ <http://www.lrvk.lt/bylos/veikla/priemones13.pdf>

⁽⁵³⁾ *Mokymosi krypties pasirinkimo galimybių didinimas 14-19 metų mokiniams, II etapas: gilesnis mokymosi diferencijavimas ir individualizavimas, siekiant ugdymo kokybės, reikalingos šiuolaikiam darbo pasauliui*

Specific targeted measures for groups at risk are focused on students from socially disadvantaged, migrant and minority/Roma backgrounds.

3. Recent ELVET-specific measures

- VET teachers receive training on how to work with potential early leavers.
- Most VET providers have developed student attendance tracking systems and action plans to improve attendance.
- Since 2011, most VET providers have established child welfare commissions (*vaiko gerovės komisija*), which involve social pedagogues to work with potential drop-outs, their families and teachers to reduce early leaving.

Cross-sector cooperation

The policy areas of employment, youth, social affairs, family, justice, health and housing are involved in cooperating on early leaving, but cooperation mechanisms are not yet established.

Multi-agency partnerships at local/institutional level involve school heads, teachers, guidance specialists, psychologists, social workers, therapists, as well as speech and language specialists. Schools are legally obliged to have a school child welfare commission, in which the cooperation of each specialist is regulated by law.

Education and career guidance

Education and career guidance is explicitly considered as a compensation measure to tackle early leaving but not as a prevention or intervention measure for this purpose.

In primary and secondary education, guidance is embedded in the curricula as an integrated topic into one or several compulsory subjects, and schools are free to organise it. In addition, a specific career guidance module might be organised in secondary education in the form of a (compulsory or optional) course, as part of cognitive, creative, artistic and social activities.

For secondary education students, guidance is also provided at school counselling services and in external specialised guidance services, through non-formal education activities.

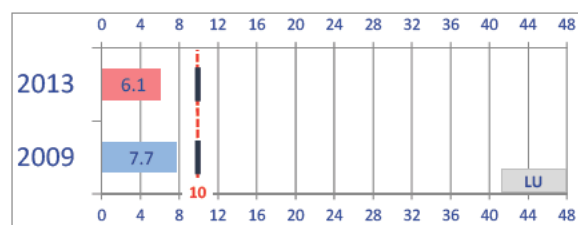
The school staff responsible for education and career guidance are teachers specifically trained or not, psychologists, social workers and social pedagogues. External career advisors also support school staff.

Education and career guidance as a compensation measure is based on two projects:

- 'Development of career education and monitoring in general education and vocational training' (2010-2014) aims at establishing a career guidance system which ensures the development of career skills for each individual. Methods used are information provision and counselling, career education, vocational practice. The Lithuanian Non-formal Education Centre for Students is responsible for the project. Other stakeholders are involved such as the Ministry of Education and Science, municipal administrations and general and vocational secondary schools.
- The 'Trust Yourself' project (see above).

Luxembourg

ELET rate and national target



Source: Eurostat (LFS).

Note: Break in time series in 2009.

Luxembourg has established a national target of maintaining the rate of early leavers below 10.0 % by 2020. If the early leaving rate stabilises at less than 10 %, the national target will be modified in 2015.

Definition(s)

Besides the Eurostat definition of early leavers, the following definition is also used: secondary students aged between 16 and 24, who have left school during the last school year and did not return before 15 November of the following school year.

National data collection

The Ministry for Education, Children and Youth is in charge of the statistical data collection for the Eurostat Labour Force Survey. Data is collected and aggregated at top level but not publicly available at national level.

The Ministry is also responsible for collecting data via a student database monthly. The data is aggregated at top level annually, and only available to the Ministry and, partly, to the Local Centres for Youth Action (*Actions locales pour jeunes – ALJ*). Results are made publicly available through surveys⁽⁵⁴⁾.

Strategy, policies and measures

1. Comprehensive strategy

There is no comprehensive strategy to tackle early leaving.

2. Recent policies and measures

The main measures that have been developed to tackle early leaving are:

- addressing early leaving in initial teacher education and continuous professional development;
- experts' visits to primary classes for early detection and intervention of potential impairments and learning difficulties. Since 2011, a new procedure enables secondary students and their care-takers to request reasonable adjustments (classroom setting, student's tasks, examination);
- 'Mosaic Classes' (*classes mosaïques*) in secondary education centres for students

with behavioural difficulties providing temporary intensive support to small groups of students;

- two recent pilot projects were developed: a) 'School Drop-In' (*Accrochage scolaire*) aimed at identifying students at risk and implementing specific measures for them; b) 'Prevention of school drop-out in secondary institutions in the North' (*Prévention de l'abandon scolaire dans les établissements du secondaire du Nord*) aimed at identifying main factors for early leaving and proposing adapted measures according to the specific situation of each school. Since May 2014, those two projects participate, together with partners from France, Slovenia and Spain, in the three-year TITA project (*Team Cooperation to Fight Early School Leaving: Training, Innovative Tools and Actions*) financed with European funds;
- the *Itzigerstee* pilot project for highly problematic students, which aims at facilitating their reintegration into ordinary education, in cooperation with parents, the school of origin and psychologists, after a maximum of two years individualised support;
- the four month 'Yes, I will' (*Yes, ech well*) workshops for early leavers, organised by the ALJ. These include sessions on motivation, teamwork, development of a vocational project as well as internships and search of an apprenticeship place;
- developing second chance schools (*Écoles de la deuxième chance – E2C*) for early leavers aged 16 to 24. E2Cs provide both general and vocational training (including an internship in a company), extracurricular activities and socio-pedagogic support;
- the 'Stop&Go' training and guidance programme of the Centre for Educational Psychology and Guidance (CPOS), which provides a multidisciplinary approach aimed at self-development for early leavers.

⁽⁵⁴⁾ <http://www.men.public.lu/fr/publications/secontaire/-statistiques-analyses/daccrochage-scolaire/index.html>

Specific targeted measures for groups at risk are focused on students from migrant background.

3. Recent ELVET-specific measures

Many of the ELET measures included above also apply to the VET sector. For example, Mosaic Classes have been established in four VET schools and E2C second chance schools are available for VET students and utilise VET pedagogies.

In terms of ELVET specific actions, Professional re-insertion courses (*Cours d'orientation et d'initiation professionnelles/Insertion professionnelle divers métiers – COIP-IPDM*) are an ELVET specific bridging measure into VET. The courses are available for early leavers under the age of 18 who do not fulfil the requirements for entry into VET. The bridging courses last one year and they prepare young people to enter formal VET through coaching, strengthening key competences and project work.

Cross-sector cooperation

The policy areas of employment, youth and family are involved in cooperating on ELET.

Cooperation mechanisms are being tested within projects ('Youth' (*Jeunes*); 'Voluntary Orientation Service' (*service volontaire d'orientation*)).

Multi-agency partnerships at local/institutional level are already well established. They involve school heads, teachers, guidance specialists, psychologists, social workers, youth workers and therapists. Every school in secondary education has a service for educational psychology and guidance, which cooperates with teachers and parents in identifying needs and priorities and contributes to the organisation of support activities outside school lessons, the cooperation with the school's medical service and with competent services and professional chambers in order to provide vocational guidance.

Education and career guidance

Education and career guidance is explicitly considered as a prevention, intervention and compensation measure to tackle early leaving.

Guidance is embedded in the primary curriculum for two years. Schools are free to decide on the organisation of the topic.

In secondary education, guidance is not embedded in the curriculum, but schools are obliged to provide it. Most of secondary schools have a Service for Educational Psychology and Guidance (*Service de psychologie et d'orientation scolaires – SPOS*); at the end of lower technical secondary education each student gets a guidance profile (*profil d'orientation*).

The school staff dealing with education and career guidance are teachers with and without specific training, education and career counsellors, psychologists, social workers and pedagogues, as well as staff responsible for extracurricular activities.

A national guidance programme has been developed to reinforce guidance in lower secondary education, with more than 300 teachers trained over the last ten years.

A Coordination Committee for several guidance services was created in 2006. Joint projects, such as a common website have been initiated. In September 2012, several public services and institutions providing different kinds of guidance and counselling have been merged into the Guidance Centre (*Maison de l'orientation*) with the cooperation of departments from three different ministries dealing with youth counselling. The following structures are notably part of this new structure:

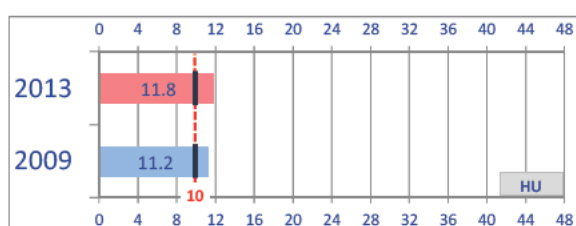
- the Centre for Educational Psychology and Guidance (*Centre de psychologie et d'orientation scolaires – CPOS*), which coordinates and evaluates SPOS, providing career guidance to students that do not have access to a SPOS in their school, developing methodologies and contents of guidance, etc.;

- the Service for Vocational Guidance at the Agency for Employment Development (*Service de l'orientation professionnelle de l'Agence pour le développement de l'emploi*), which provides individual guidance to support educational and professional projects;
- the Local Centres for Youth Action (ALJ), which provide education and career guidance activities and are in charge of tracking, contacting and supporting students in early leaving and those at risk of dropping out;
- the Unit for School Integration of Newcomers (*Cellules d'accueil scolaires pour nouveaux-arrivants – CASNA*);
- the Youth National Service (*Service National de la Jeunesse – SNJ*), which offers the possibility to do an internship in an organisation within the youth voluntary service in order to gain practical skills.

Compensation measures on education and career guidance are carried out by ALJ, CPOS and SNJ.

Hungary

ELET rate and national target



Source: Eurostat (LFS).

Hungary has established a national target of decreasing the rate of early leavers to 10 % by 2020.

Definition(s)

Hungary uses the Eurostat definition of early leavers.

National data collection

The Hungarian Central Statistical Office is in charge of collecting statistical data for the Eurostat Labour Force Survey. This data collection is aggregated at top and regional levels and made publicly available ⁽⁵⁵⁾.

Complementary information is available in some surveys, such as the Hungarian Life Course Survey conducted between 2006 and 2011 by Tarki and Education ⁽⁵⁶⁾.

Strategy, policies and measures

1. Comprehensive strategy

The Government Resolution 1603/2014 (XI.4.) on the adoption of a comprehensive early leaving strategy was published on 4 November ⁽⁵⁷⁾. The main measures of the strategy concern:

- reinforcing basic skills and competences in primary education in order to prevent grade retention;
- promoting integrated, inclusive education at all levels to avoid segregation;
- introducing flexible educational pathways to compensate the fact that compulsory school age will be reduced from 18 to 16. Intervention and compensation measures have been identified in order to keep students in formal education beyond compulsory school age;
- introducing innovative methodology, such as individualised teaching methods, mentoring, individual development plans, career plans, involvement of parents, scholarships, as well as legal regulations and financial incentives;
- improving the results of low performing schools in order to increase the

⁽⁵⁵⁾ <http://www.ksh.hu/education>

⁽⁵⁶⁾ <http://www.econ.core.hu/file/download/bwp/-bwp1003.pdf>

⁽⁵⁷⁾ The 'Government Resolution 1603/2014 (XI.4.)' on the adoption of a comprehensive early leaving strategy was published on 4 November 2014 but the text of the strategy was not yet available when going to press.

effectiveness of the school system and improve equity in education;

- introducing a data collection for early leaving and an early warning system covering all education levels in general and vocational education, training and special needs education;

2. Recent policies and measures

In addition to the policies and measures that will be implemented as part of the early leaving strategy:

- early childhood education and care will become compulsory for 3-5 year old children from September 2015.
- since September 2013, school days last until 4 pm, with various activities provided after the lessons.
- the 'Bridge Programmes' were introduced in 2013 in vocational schools at upper secondary level:
 - Bridge 1: for students up to the end of compulsory school age (16), who completed basic education, but were not admitted to an upper secondary school. This programme provides them with the fundamental skills and competencies that are necessary for continuing their studies;
 - Bridge 2: for students up to the end of compulsory school age (16), who did not complete basic education but at least six grades of the eight-grade basic education by the age of 15. This programme prepares pupils for vocational training by increasing motivation for learning and developing the necessary skills for an occupation. Upon completion, students receive a certificate proving the accomplishment of basic education; if they pass the vocational examination, students also receive a certificate for partial vocational qualification.

Specific targeted measures for groups at risk are focused on students from socially disadvantaged and minority/Roma backgrounds.

3. Recent ELVET-specific measures

No ELVET specific measures have been identified but many general ELET measures - including mentoring and scholarship schemes like *Útravaló* and *Arany János* - include specific VET strands and the new 'Bridge Programmes' (see above) are now available in 86 VET schools.

VET teacher training courses have started to include modules on early leaving and vulnerable groups.

Cross-sector cooperation

The policy areas of employment, social affairs (including youth and family), health, public administration and home affairs are involved in cooperating on early leaving, but cooperation mechanisms are not yet established.

Multi-agency partnerships at local/institutional level involve professionals such as school heads, teachers, psychologists, and nurses but partnership practice is not yet established.

Education and career guidance

Education and career guidance is not explicitly considered as a prevention and intervention measure to tackle early leaving but as a compensation measure.

Guidance is a cross-curricular topic at all levels of education. It is also integrated into several subjects or subject areas. In upper general education, it may be taught as an optional separate subject. School counselling services are available in secondary education.

The school staff dealing with education and career guidance are teachers with and without specific training. Very few career guidance counsellors are available so far. Psychologists, social workers and pedagogues (the two latter only in secondary education) also intervene in guidance but without specific training.

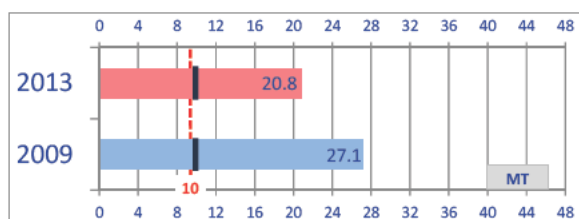
As to external providers, public employment services provide career information and organise career fairs for students in basic and upper

secondary schools. They also intervene at school for individual guidance and career classes. Moreover, since January 2012, county offices of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry are also expected to play a role in guidance.

The 'Bridge programmes' (see above) are operating as compensation measures for early leavers, targeting students who, for some reason, did not make the transition between lower and upper secondary levels.

Malta

ELET rate and national target



Source: Eurostat (LFS).

Malta has established a national target of decreasing the rate of early leavers to 10 % by 2020.

Definition(s)

Malta uses the Eurostat definition of early leavers.

National data collection

The National Statistics Office (NSO) is in charge of collecting the statistical data for the Eurostat Labour Force Survey.

The 'Electronic Platform' (E1), is a database used for administrative purposes in State schools. It registers each student with a unique number, which enables tracking students from kindergarten to school level. E1 is also used centrally to monitor absenteeism and students at risk of early leaving. The statistics on early leaving are aggregated annually at top and institutional levels but are not publicly available.

Non-State (church and independent) schools have their own individual student databases and statistical data is centrally collated by the Quality Assurance Department.

In addition, the 'Tracer Study' gathers information on what students do after compulsory education (for State and non-State sectors). It is administered by guidance teachers and trainee career advisors within the Education Psycho-Social Services of the Directorate for Educational Services (DES). Data is aggregated at top and institutional levels by the DES Student Services Department and annually published in a report.

The Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) produced an exit survey for its vocational courses. As from January 2014, this survey is carried out in all further and higher institutions. This survey, which is not publicly available, is used both as a tool to identify students who drop out and support them re-engaging with education, and as a monitoring tool to make courses more relevant.

Strategy, policies and measures

1. Comprehensive strategy

The Maltese 'Strategic Plan for the Prevention of Early School Leaving in Malta' ⁽⁵⁸⁾ (2014-2020)', published in June 2014, aims at facilitating focused action that will support students to make the best out of their school years, from early childhood to the end of compulsory school and beyond. The main prevention, intervention and compensation measures of this strategic plan are:

- providing funding for a school-based approach to reducing early leaving;
- providing free childcare for children whose parents/guardians are at work or in education;
- educating for and through diversity; meeting the needs of high achievers; setting up

⁽⁵⁸⁾ <http://education.gov.mt/esl/Documents/School%20Leaving%20in%20Malta.pdf>

middle schools: making caring community schools possible; developing e-Learning content to better respond to student learning needs; tapping mobile technology for more student engagement; empowering students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties;

- strengthening the transition process across educational pathways; honing the potential of the Secondary School Certificate and Profile; introducing a well-structured vocational pathway in the Maltese secondary schools;
- supporting teachers to address early leaving;
- reviewing and consolidating career guidance across levels;
- supporting students at risk in the secondary school; harnessing youth workers' support for older students; consolidating support networks around students at risk;
- developing early warning systems to enable timely action;
- harnessing and strengthening parental support to combat early leaving; supporting students and parents through after-school support programmes;
- striking strategic partnerships for an effective second chance education for students at risk; providing quality second chance education for persons with a disability for better life chances;
- implementing the Youth Guarantee Scheme to reach out to young people at risk.

2. Recent policies and measures

All the main policies and measures related to early leaving are included in the comprehensive strategy.

Specific targeted measures for groups at risk are focused on students from socially disadvantaged and migrant backgrounds, pregnant teenagers/young parents and young people in correctional facilities.

3. Recent ELVET-specific measures

VET providers run courses which are specifically targeted at early leavers from secondary education. For example, the Institution of Tourism Studies with the Malta Hotels, the Restaurants Association and four colleges run together a pre-employment training scheme for school drop-outs.

Cross-sector cooperation

There is a tradition of cooperation on early leaving between the policy areas of employment, youth, social affairs and family. The health policy area is also involved in projects.

The recently adopted early leaving strategy recommends the setting up of an inter-ministerial Committee, under the coordination of the Ministry for Education and Employment, including all ministries with a relevant role in addressing early leaving, as well as NGO's, schools from the non-state sector and parents' associations to ensure coordination and cooperation.

By the end of 2014, an 'Early School Leaving Working Group' shall be set up. Its role will be to assist schools and other entities at local level in determining the needs of children and young people and developing prevention measures adapted to the local conditions.

Multi-agency partnerships at local/institutional level are well established. They are coordinated by a specific unit within the Student Services Department and intervene locally. They involve school heads, college principals, teachers, guidance specialists, psychologists, social workers, social support workers, youth workers, speech and language specialists, and other professionals (senior officials at central institutions, curriculum leaders as well as social, emotional and behavioural difficulties professionals – SEBD). These professionals work together at school and colleges as multi-disciplinary teams to identify and support students at risk of early leaving and can refer students for an individual case management and

support. SSD has access to the students' database to monitor absenteeism, the educational progress of students with special needs, etc. As an example, the Alternative Learning Programme was implemented through a partnership between the psycho-social services in schools and at central level, the Employment and Training Corporation (PES), the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST), the National Youth Agency (*Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ*) and private companies.

Education and career guidance

Education and career guidance is explicitly considered as a prevention, intervention and compensation measure to tackle early leaving.

Education and career guidance is integrated into one or several subjects in the primary and secondary curricula. In addition, as of September 2014, 'Personal, Social and Career Development' will be introduced as a compulsory separate subject in the core curriculum for all primary and secondary students.

Career guidance and counselling services are also provided in primary and secondary schools. Orientation visits to further and higher education providers and to work places are organised. Students have to spend a job shadowing week in a work place of their choice. Guest speakers are invited to discuss careers and post-compulsory education for students and parents, already as of the last years of primary education. Students are trained in writing *curriculum vitae*, being interviewed for a job and other soft skills.

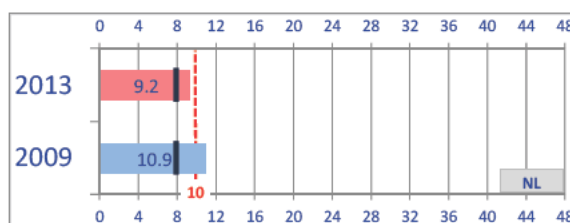
School staff dealing with education and career guidance are teachers specifically trained or not, guidance specialists, psychologists and social workers. In primary education, guidance is provided by secondary education teachers belonging to the same college.

A 'Walk-in Service', where students can meet career advisors is also organised by secondary schools during the summer holidays to help

secondary students decide on what to do after finishing school. The services and their frequency are increased as students proceed to the more senior years. This service is also available for early leavers wishing to re-enter the education or training system.

The Netherlands

ELET rate and national target



Source: Eurostat (LFS).

The Netherlands has established a national target of decreasing the rate of early leavers to less than 8 % by 2020.

Definition(s)

Besides the Eurostat definition of early leavers, another national definition is used: students between 12 and 23 years of age who leave school in the course of the school year without basic qualification (general upper secondary, pre-university, or at least a level-2 secondary vocational diploma).

National data collection

Statistics Netherland (CBS) is in charge of collecting statistical data for the Eurostat Labour Force Survey. This data collection is aggregated at top level and publicly available ⁽⁵⁹⁾.

DUO, which is part of the Ministry of Education, also collects daily information on students, including their progression via the Basic Record Database for Education (BRON), an online student database. The data is aggregated at top, regional, local and institutional levels.

⁽⁵⁹⁾ <http://www.cbs.nl/en-GB/menu/themas/onderwijs/cijfers/overig/schoolverlaters.htm?Languageswitch=on>

Nominative information on early leavers is only available for schools and municipalities via a protected online area. Monthly and annual reports are sent to schools, municipalities and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and are publicly available ⁽⁶⁰⁾.

Strategy, policies and measures

1. Comprehensive strategy

The Netherlands has developed a comprehensive strategy to tackle early leaving called 'Drive to Reduce Drop-out Rates' (*Aanval op schooluitval*) ⁽⁶¹⁾, which includes the following measures:

- reducing the gap between education and care by improving coordination of care structures at schools and locally;
- compulsory school attendance (now until the age of 18) and qualification obligation;
- an action plan for a career orientation and guidance;
- a 'Digital Absence Portal' improving the registration of school absenteeism and early leavers by identifying students with a unique number in order to track their progression;
- actions to support the transfer of students from pre-vocational secondary education to secondary vocational programmes without switching to a different school.

The time frame is 2008-2015. The budget for tackling early leaving is allocated to each region and is approximately EUR 56 million per year in total.

2. Recent policies and measures

All the main policies and measures related to early leaving are included in the comprehensive strategy.

Specific targeted measures for groups at risk are focused on students in the first year of secondary vocational education.

3. Recent ELVET-specific measures

The measures related to the Dutch national comprehensive strategy to tackle ELET are relevant to both general education and VET, and measures are implemented in both sectors (see above).

Cross-sector cooperation

Cooperation mechanisms are being developed. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science coordinate the cross-sector policy development in which the policy areas of employment, youth, social affairs and justice are involved.

Multi-agency partnerships at local/institutional level are well established. They involve school heads, teachers, guidance specialists and youth workers. For example, the 'Care-advice-teams' (*zorg- en adviesteam*) involve professionals within the school, youth and social care, healthcare, municipality and police representatives to operate both inside and outside schools to support students needing extra care or guidance.

Education and career guidance

Education and career guidance is explicitly considered as a prevention, intervention and compensation measure to tackle early leaving.

Education and career guidance is part of the lower secondary curriculum but schools are free to decide on the way they organise it and the staff involved.

The 2009-2012 Action Plan for Career Orientation and Guidance (*Stimulerend LOB*) ⁽⁶²⁾ aimed at going beyond the provision of information to encompass more interactive methods such as mentoring, coaching, one-on-one guidance and work placements.

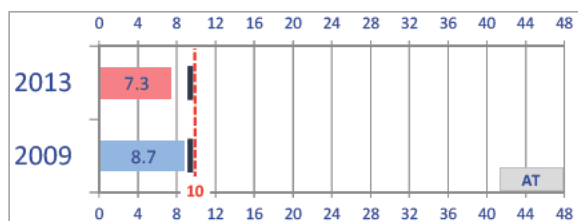
⁽⁶⁰⁾ <http://www.vsvverkenner.nl/english/>

⁽⁶¹⁾ http://www.aanvalopschooluitval.nl/userfiles/-file/2014/VSV-Boekje_UK_2014.pdf

⁽⁶²⁾ http://www.lob-vo.nl/sites/default/files/eind-product_lob_0.pdf

Austria

ELET rate and national target



Source: Eurostat (LFS).

Austria has established a national target of maintaining the rate of early leavers at 9.5 % by 2020. A more ambitious target is being considered, as the original one has already been reached.

Definition(s)

Besides the Eurostat definition of early leavers, other national definitions are used: a) students leaving education without a lower secondary education leaving certificate (there are 9 years of compulsory education in Austria, but a positive school report in the 8th grade is required to enter most types of grade 9 upper secondary types of education) and b) students who stop their education after 9 years of compulsory schooling.

National data collection

Statistics Austria is in charge of the statistical data collection for the Eurostat Labour Survey. This data is aggregated at national level⁽⁶³⁾.

Data on early leaving is also collected each year via a student database and aggregated at top and regional levels. It is made publicly available in an anonymised format every year⁽⁶⁴⁾.

⁽⁶³⁾ https://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/bildung_und_kultur/formales_bildungswesen/fruehe_schul_abgaenger/index.html

⁽⁶⁴⁾ http://www.statistik.at/web_de/static/abschluss_der_sekundarstufe_i_der_14-jaehrigen_schuelerinnen_und_schueler_055446.pdf. See also *Bildung in Zahlen: 'Key Indicators and Analyses'* at http://www.statistik.at/web_de/dynamic/statistiken/bildung_und_kultur/publdetail?id=5&listid=5&detail=461;

Researchers may get specific disaggregated data and analysis from the Austrian Statistics Office in return for a fee.

Strategy, policies and measures

1. Comprehensive strategy

The Austrian 'National Strategy to Combat Early School Leaving'⁽⁶⁵⁾ (*Nationale Strategie zur Verhinderung frühzeitigen (Aus-) Bildungsabbruchs*) includes, among others, the following measures:

- since 2009, there is an obligation for all children between the age of five and six (i.e. one year prior to the beginning of primary education) to attend early childhood education and care (*Kindergarten*);
- reorganising the teaching and examination systems in upper secondary education to avoid grade retention. Teaching will be organised in semesterised modules. Students will be allowed to move on to the next grade despite poor marks in two – or three (under special circumstances) – of the modules. They will receive additional training for the modules they failed. The implementation of this system started in 2013 and should be finalised in 2017;
- individualising teaching and learning as part of the quality management system being implemented at school;
- several pilot projects on social work at school;
- language support offered to students with a migrant background;
- specific support targeting students at risk of dropping out of school in year 9 of compulsory education. The Youth Coaching Scheme (*Jugendcoaching*) requests

and 'Tables' at http://www.statistik.at/web_de/dynamic/statistiken/bildung_und_kultur/publdetail?id=5&listid=5&detail=462 as well as http://www.statistik.at/web_de/static/abschluss_der_sekundarstufe_i_der_14-jaehrigen_schuelerinnen_und_schueler_055446.pdf.

⁽⁶⁵⁾ https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/schulen/unterricht/-ba/schulabbruch_eslstrategie_24401.pdf?4dzqm2

teachers to identify students at risk and to refer them to coaches who, with the help of other professionals, support the young people according to their needs.

- setting up early warning systems to identify children at educational risk so that measures can be agreed between the school and parents as soon as possible;
- implementing an action plan to fight against absenteeism (cooperation between students, parents, school psychologists and social workers for any unjustified absence exceeding 30 hours);
- reforming the second chance education system. For instance, the 'Fit for Training' pilot project (*AusbildungsFIT*) is designed to give young people a second chance to acquire, at their own pace, basic qualifications and social skills, while the 'Adult Education Initiative' (*Initiative Erwachsenenbildung*) aims at providing high-quality and sustainable supply in adult education throughout Austria, specifically for basic education;
- offering preparation courses for graduation in lower secondary education.

2. Recent policies and measures

Each school must develop a plan to support low achievers (*standortspezifisches Förderkonzept*).

Specific targeted measures for groups at risk are focused on students with migrant background.

3. Recent ELVET-specific measures

- Apprenticeship coaching has been piloted since 2012. Its goal is to support apprentices during their training and in that way boost apprenticeship completion rates.
- Supra-company apprenticeships were introduced as a 'safety net' for young people who could not find an apprenticeship place. The practical part (short work placements) is completed at a training institution or in several different companies, while the

school-based part is provided at the regular part-time vocational schools.

Cross-sector cooperation

Cooperation mechanisms are being developed. There are currently several examples of cross-sector cooperation:

- An interministerial steering group coordinates all activities for the implementation of the new 'Compulsory Education until the Age of 18' policy initiative, which also deals with early leaving. This steering group involves the following ministries: Education and Women's Affairs, Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, Science, Research and Economy.
- The 'Youth Coaching Scheme' (see above) is run by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Women's Affairs.
- The 'Territorial Employment Pacts' (TEPs) rely on partnerships between the Federal Employment Agency, provinces, the Federal Social Welfare Office and social partners. Their aim is to support the transition to employment at regional level.
- The 'Adult Education Initiative', relying on the cooperation between education national and regional authorities, aims to provide high-quality and sustainable supply of adult education (with special emphasis on basic education and preparation courses for graduation in lower secondary education).

Multi-agency partnerships at local/institutional level exist within projects. They may involve school heads, teachers, guidance specialists, psychologists, social workers, youth workers, therapists, as well as speech and language specialists.

Education and career guidance

Education and career guidance is explicitly considered as a prevention, intervention and compensation measure to tackle early leaving.

In primary and secondary education, guidance services are provided by external guidance services. In secondary education, it is also embedded as a cross-curricular topic. Moreover, in lower secondary education, career guidance (*Berufsorientierung*) is embedded in the curriculum either as a separate subject or integrated into a group of subjects. Schools have some autonomy to decide on the ways guidance is introduced in the curriculum.

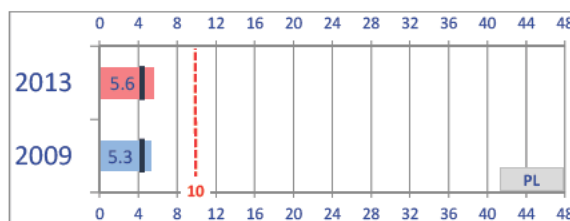
School staff responsible for education and career guidance are teachers with and without specific qualifications and guidance specialists. Individual counselling is mainly managed by specifically trained teachers.

The Information, Guidance, Orientation for Further Education and the Professional Career programme (IBOBB)⁽⁶⁶⁾, which is part of the comprehensive strategy, focuses on providing students in years 7 and 8 of compulsory education with career management skills and information about professional and educational pathways, both in the classroom and via individual counselling.

Education and career guidance as a compensation measure is provided through the 'Educational Counselling in Austria' initiative, which aims at coordinating a network of services on education and career guidance for everyone, irrespective of age, level of education and socio-economic background. It also aims at fostering lifelong learning, re-entering education and promoting the integration of disadvantaged adults.

Poland

ELET rate and national target



Source: Eurostat (LFS).

Poland has established a national target of reducing the rate of early leavers to 4.5 % by 2020.

Definition(s)

Besides the Eurostat definition of early leavers, other definitions are used in official documents: students not continuing education and/or training after lower secondary education; students having dropped out of education and training without completing compulsory education (so-called 'drop-outs').

National data collection

The Central Statistical Office collects statistical data for the Eurostat Labour Force Survey, aggregated at top and regional levels, and published in a quarterly report⁽⁶⁷⁾.

Data on students failing to complete compulsory education is also collected via the Education Information System (*System Informacji Oświatowej* – SIO), which was introduced in 2005, and is aggregated twice a year. Since 2012, changes are being gradually introduced in the way data is collected as well as to the structure and operation of the EIS. The modernised system will enable more detailed monitoring at national, regional and local levels of the three ranges of compulsory education – pre-primary education, full-time education until completion of ISCED 2 or until a student reaches the age of 18 and part-time education

⁽⁶⁶⁾ <https://www.bmbf.gv.at/schulen/bo/index1.html>

⁽⁶⁷⁾ See the LFS results for PL at http://stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/qus/pw_aktw_ekonom_udn_1kw_2013.pdf and http://www.stat.gov.pl/qus/praca_wynagrodzenia_ENG_HTML.htm.

until 18 years of age. The system will enable identifying more quickly the risk of early leaving as tracking of students' progression will start as of 5 years of age. The new EIS system is due to fully replace the old one by 2017. The data collection in EIS is currently being transferred through the territorial self-government units at local level and then to the regional superintendent's office before reaching the Ministry of Education. In the new system the data collection will be directly transferred to the central database run by the Ministry of Education. This will reduce the number of institutions involved and should result in more valid and reliable data.

The data collection is aggregated at top, regional and local levels. The new system will also make the data collection available at school level for authorised people. The Ministry of Education makes some statistics publicly available through the EIS website ⁽⁶⁸⁾.

Strategy, policies and measures

1. Comprehensive strategy

Poland has two initiatives, that have similar aims as a comprehensive early leaving strategy:

The 2013 'Strategy for the Development of Human Capital 2020' (*Strategia Rozwoju Kapitału Ludzkiego 2020*) ⁽⁶⁹⁾, aims, amongst others, at:

- lowering the starting age for compulsory education;
- improving accessibility and quality of early school education, especially in rural areas;
- providing additional educational classes to develop students' interests and talents;
- improving the quality of teaching and training at all education levels;

⁽⁶⁸⁾ See <http://www.cie.men.gov.pl/index.php/dane-statystyczne.html>. Statistical information on students and schools can also be found on the website of the project 'Strategist – Monitoring and Development System' in the 'Education' area at <http://strateg.stat.gov.pl/Home/Strateg>.

⁽⁶⁹⁾ <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/DetailsServlet?id=WMP-20130000640>

- better adjusting education and training to the socio-economic and labour market needs;
- improving the quality of vocational education;
- developing the National Qualification and Validation System;
- strengthening educational and professional counselling at school.

In addition, the strategic document 'Lifelong Learning Perspective' (*Perspektywa uczenia się przez całe życie*) ⁽⁷⁰⁾ aiming at improving students' skills and competences, including actions for preventing early leaving, such as:

- extending and improving access to early childhood education and care;
- supporting young people's creativity and innovativeness;
- improving the National Qualification System;
- adjusting education and training to the sustainable economy needs, labour market changes and social needs;
- fostering lifelong learning.

2. Recent policies and measures

Since 2012, actions are being implemented to facilitate a return to education and acquisition of vocational skills for adults, who have resigned from this opportunity in their youth. They consist of offering the possibility to gain or supplement professional qualifications in out-of-school schemes, such as vocational trainings; introducing accelerated training schemes for adults to catch up with competency and general education gaps; adjusting trainings to the labour market needs, including joint trainings with labour offices entitling institutions not currently in the education system to run vocational courses.

Specific targeted measures for groups at risk are focused on students with socially disadvantaged and minority/Roma backgrounds and on students with special educational needs.

⁽⁷⁰⁾ http://www.men.gov.pl/images/ksztalcenie_kadra-perspektywy_uczenia_sie_przez_cale_zycie.pdf

3. Recent ELVET-specific measures

Several re-training and second chance programmes rely on VET and VET pedagogies, including those offered by the Voluntary Labour Corps (VLCs) (see below) and re-training programmes aimed at early leavers from education. For example, several public employment services are running the 'Your Career Your Choice' project, with the goal to design and test new training measures for unemployed persons under 30 years of age. Participants take part in on-the-job training and school-based VET.

Cross-sector cooperation

Cooperation mechanisms are being developed. Several Ministries (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of Regional Development and Ministry of Justice) cooperate with the Ministry of National Education to prepare the implementation documents for setting the detailed roles and tasks of particular Ministries in the early leaving strategy.

The implementation of the strategic documents 'Strategy for the Development of Human Capital 2020' and 'Lifelong Learning Perspective' (see above) involves cooperation of many different stakeholders: the government, local and professional self-governments, employers, NGOs and education and training providers.

Multi-agency partnerships at local/institutional level involve school heads, teachers, guidance specialists, psychologists and social workers. They have a legal obligation to cooperate in providing support to students and their parents who require specific additional support.

Education and career guidance

Education and career guidance is explicitly considered as a prevention, intervention and compensation measure to tackle early leaving.

Guidance is not embedded in the curriculum but school counselling services are available in secondary education. Guidance activities/classes in schools are offered by professional

advisors specially hired by the schools, teachers not specially trained, school psychologist and pedagogues.

Education and career guidance is also provided to secondary students by external Guidance and Counselling Centres (*Poradnie psychologiczno-pedagogiczne*), organising on-demand individual consultations to students and their parents.

The Voluntary Labour Corps (*Ochotnicze Hufce Pracy*) managed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, provides career and professional guidance, professional information and services and vocational training, especially for disadvantaged young people out of mainstream education.

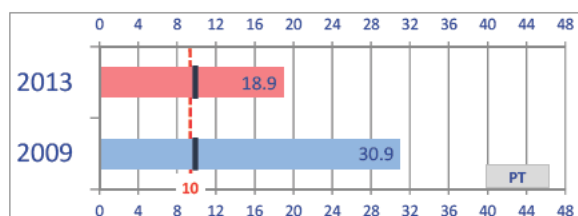
The Mobile Centres for Professional Information (*Mobilne Centra Informacji Zawodowej*), the Vocational Training Centres (*Ośrodki Szkolenia Zawodowego*) and the Youth Career Centres (*Młodzieżowe Centra Kariery*) also offer career guidance services especially to early leavers aged 15-25.

One of the strands of the new 'Knowledge, Education and Growth' operational programme (*Program Operacyjny Wiedza, Edukacja, Rozwój* 2014-2020 – PO WER) ⁽⁷¹⁾, introduced in January 2014, concerns individualised guidance services for young people not in education, training or employment. The objective is to provide young people with training for effective employment search, participants' evaluation (knowledge, skills and potential), individual vocational guidance and counselling services to set up individual career plans and agenda for action.

⁽⁷¹⁾ http://www.mir.gov.pl/fundusze/Fundusze_Europejskie-2014_2020/Documents/PO_WER_08012014.pdf

Portugal

ELET rate and national target



Source: Eurostat (LFS).

Portugal has established a national target of decreasing the rate of early leavers to 10 % by 2020.

Definition(s)

Early leaving is not officially defined but other concepts are used such as 'school drop-out' and 'absenteeism'.

National data collection

The National Statistics Office is in charge of collecting statistical data for the Eurostat Labour Force Survey. Data is aggregated at national and regional level each year ⁽⁷²⁾.

The General Directorate for Statistics in Education and Science is in charge of quarterly collecting data on the number of students who are at risk of dropping out due to a high level of absenteeism and, at the end of the school year, data on the number of students that have dropped out of school. This data is aggregated at top, regional, local and institution levels, and is available in a business intelligence platform only to entities within the Ministry of Education.

The General Directorate for Education also conducts surveys on schools in disadvantaged contexts on an ad hoc basis. These provide more detailed information about the reasons for students' drop-out and the measures taken by the schools to accompany these students.

⁽⁷²⁾ http://www.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpid=INE&xpgid=ine_indicadores&indOcorrCod=0006269&contexto=bd&selTab=tab2

Strategy, policies and measures

1. Comprehensive strategy

The Portuguese Government's strategy for the promotion of learning and school success includes a comprehensive set of policy measures explicitly referring to the reduction of early leaving as one of the expected outcomes.

Additionally the Council of Ministers of 21 June 2012 approved a decree-law ⁽⁷³⁾ with a specific chapter entitled 'Measures to prevent school failure and early school leaving' for basic and secondary education. This chapter comprises the main policy measures targeted to at-risk students and their families.

The main examples of the policy measures included in these documents are:

- revising the curricula;
- reducing grade retention by offering additional support to those who did not pass the examinations so that they have a second chance to pass them, thanks to an additional period at the end of the school year;
- allowing schools to introduce a second teacher in some classes with higher risk of students' failure and drop-out; fostering collaborative practices among students; building temporary flexible groups of students, independently of their classes, to specifically support them, foster their learning and achievement;
- increasing the flexibility and permeability of the educational pathways by experimenting the dual model in vocational training through a joint partnership of schools, companies

⁽⁷³⁾ Decree-law nr. 176/2012 at <https://dre.pt/pdf1sdip/2012/08/14900/0406804071.pdf>. See also the Normatives Dispatches nr 24-A/2012 (Section VI): <https://dre.pt/pdf2sdip/2012/12/236000002/0000400010.pdf> and nr 6/2014 (Chapter IV, nr 3): http://www.google.pt/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CB8QFJAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.dgicd.min-edu.pt%2Fdata%2F-dgicd%2Flegislacao%2FCalendario_Escolar%2FDespacho_normativo_6_2014_26%2520maio.pdf&ei=K13U-CALYTGaJDzqYqB&usq=AFQjCNE8cT9-kxVFjmlTfEe1OjxF_Mb7qvw&sig2=-hiE7HKESwVFB5lhUGvmcVg.

- and municipalities; increasing VET access and quality;
- developing a specialised on-going training for teachers at national level;
- promoting a smooth transition of special educational needs students from school to life-contexts, at the end of secondary education;
- creating a national network of guidance centres;
- early support for students at risk of drop-out with the creation of multidisciplinary teams at school level to support them;
- making it compulsory for municipal commissions to act immediately on school absenteeism cases and for schools to act upon early learning difficulties in key learning areas such as reading, writing and maths;
- increasing school autonomy and accountability of school leaders;
- setting up of Pedagogic Support Plans for students with learning difficulties, in cooperation with parents, teachers and school psychologists.

2. Recent policies and measures

The main policies and measures recently developed to tackle early leaving include:

- launching a national external assessment of the quality of early childhood education and care in 2013 in order to create pedagogical guidelines for 0 to 3 year olds and revise the existing curriculum for 3 to 6 year olds;
- the Educational Territories of Priority Intervention (TEIP). This programme includes actions on tutorship, cultural and social work with young people, family support to improve their learning ability, special support for at-risk students, smaller classes or extra teachers, additional flexibility within curriculum management, additional offer of vocational pathways from the early stages (as of 13 years of age), second chance classes for out-of-school students, improvement of school management, community involvement, etc.;
- providing free extra-curricular activities (sport, arts, English) for all primary students;
- up-scaling the 'More success' programme (*Mais Sucesso*), specifically designed to increase the school performance of low-achievers at risk of dropping out;
- providing additional support and adaptation of the curriculum for students not having Portuguese as their mother tongue;
- hiring specialised staff to support teachers in developing extra-curricular activities, managing absenteeism and providing individual support in socially and economically disadvantaged areas that are considered as educational territories of priority intervention;
- identifying early drop-outs and students at-risk through the municipal Joint Commissions for the Protection of at-risk Minors (CPCJ). These are composed by municipality staff, social security services, local NGOs and at least one teacher. The CPCJ executive group also collaborates with other actors in the sectors of health, education, security, as well as with parents and local associations;
- making it mandatory for schools to report any absenteeism situation longer than two weeks to the municipal commissions for the protection of children and youth;
- diversifying the education offer with the introduction of the Integrated Programme for Education and Training (PIEF). This programme facilitates the completion of lower secondary education for early leavers or at risk students over 15 years old through tailored curricula, tutoring and a strong vocational focus. Students may enrol at any time of the year and pursue PIEF studies at their own pace.

Specific targeted measures for groups at risk are focused on students with socially disadvantaged and minority/Roma backgrounds, as well as students with special educational needs.

3. Recent ELVET-specific measures

No ELVET specific measures have been identified but some of the TEIP measures also apply to the VET sector and the PIEF programme incorporates a strong VET dimension (see above).

Cross-sector cooperation

There is a tradition of cooperation on early leaving between the ministries of Solidarity, Employment and Social Security (including Family); Education and Science; Justice; Youth Sports and Health. The National Commission for the Protection of at-risk Children and Youth, which is now in charge, was originally not specifically designed to coordinate issues on early leaving.

Multi-agency partnerships tackling early leaving exist in all municipalities. The National Commission for the Protection of at-risk Children and Youth is mandated to act when a student has serious absenteeism problems or drops out of school. These involve municipality staff, social services, local NGOs and at least one teacher. The National Commission's executive group also collaborates with other actors in the sectors of health, education, security, as well as with parents and local associations.

Multi-agency partnerships at school level involve school heads, teachers, guidance specialists, psychologists, social workers and youth workers. Although since 1991 there is a legal obligation to constitute these multidisciplinary teams (with extended competences since 2012), in 2013/14, these teams cooperating on early leaving were only available in over 30 % of the schools nationwide. The practice is that school professionals (teachers and school psychologists) informally establish local networks for referral, information and resource sharing purposes. All interested stakeholders hold regular local meetings, in the form of 'Local Education Councils' and 'Local Social Commissions', promoted nationwide by the municipalities.

Education and career guidance

Education and career guidance is explicitly considered as a prevention, intervention and compensation measure to tackle early leaving.

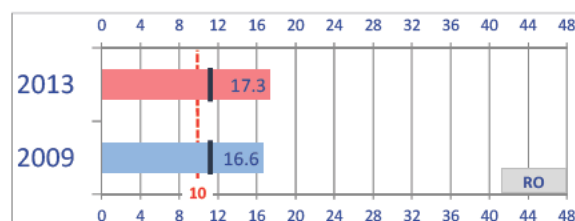
Guidance is not embedded in the curriculum. However, it is provided by school counselling services in the form of extra-curricular activities.

School staff dealing with education and career guidance are teachers with and without specific training and psychologists.

Education and career guidance as a compensation measure is provided by the Centres for Qualification and Vocational Education (*Centros para a Qualificação e Ensino Profissional – CQEP*). These centres target people over 15 years of age, as well as adults in a lifelong perspective. Guidance is delivered individually and in small groups. The authority responsible for developing and monitoring the nationwide network of more than 200 CQEP is the National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education and Training (*Agência Nacional para a Qualificação e o Ensino Profissional – ANQEP*).

Romania

ELET rate and national target



Source: Eurostat (LFS).

Romania has established a national target of decreasing the rate of early leavers to 11.3 % by 2020.

Definition(s)

Romania uses the Eurostat definition of early leavers.

National data collection

The National Institute for Statistics (INS) collects statistical data for the Eurostat Labour Force Survey. Data is aggregated at top level only but should soon also be available at regional level. The results are published quarterly in the INS report 'Labour Force in Romania: Employment and Unemployment' and should soon also be available in TEMPO, the INS online database⁽⁷⁴⁾.

UNICEF/UNESCO Institute for Statistics cooperate with Romania in the context of the Out-of-School Children Initiative (OOSCI), to monitor the progress on reducing the number of children out-of-school by 2015 and several reports were published in 2012 on this topic⁽⁷⁵⁾.

Strategy, policies and measures

1. Comprehensive strategy

The comprehensive strategy on early leaving is currently in the adoption process and is expected to be adopted still in 2014. It aims at coordinating all policies in the area and providing more European funds for projects aimed at reducing early leaving. The main measures concern:

- giving good premises for functional literacy as of the early childhood education stage via two programmes:
 - the Programme for Inclusive Education (*Educație Timpurie Incluzivă*)⁽⁷⁶⁾, which aims at providing services for circa 1 000 teachers working in kindergartens;

- the Programme for the Reform of Early Childhood Education (*Reforma Educației Timpurii*)⁽⁷⁷⁾, which aims at supplying educational material for the preparatory grade.
- offering support through education and career guidance activities for self-awareness, decision-making, implementation of personal career development plans, focusing guidance on students' needs;
- annual social programmes to support students from families with low income through the provision of school supplies for primary and lower secondary students in the four first years (*Rechizite Scolar*)⁽⁷⁸⁾; monthly scholarship allowance (*Bani de liceu*)⁽⁷⁹⁾ to continue studies (full-time upper secondary education, as well as VET studies); financial aid to stimulate school and higher education students from socially and economically disadvantaged areas to acquire personal computers (*Euro 200*); reimbursement of transport costs and school buses, etc.;
- support for low achievers, via programmes such as 'School after school' (*Școală după școală*) or the 'Remedial education programme' (*Program de educație remedială*);
- the 'Education, Qualification and Facilitation of the Transition to a Job for Students and Young People at Risk or in a Situation of school Drop-out' project (2009-2012). One of the objectives of this project, funded by the European Social Fund, was to develop methodologies and support instruments for the identification of groups at risk of early leaving;
- redesigning statistical research in education by applying the 2011 ISCED qualification and improving data collection on school leavers;

⁽⁷⁴⁾ <http://www.insse.ro/cms/>

⁽⁷⁵⁾ See *Analysing the situation of out-of-school children in Romania* at <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/OOSCI%20Reports/romania-oosci-report-2012-en.pdf>, *Cohort Analysis Estimation of the Drop-out Phenomenon* at http://www.unicef.org/romania/studiu_cohorte_EN_22_nov_2012_pt_web.pdf and *Copiii care nu merg la școală. O analiză a participării la educație în învățământul primar și gimnazial* at <http://www.unicef.ro/wp-content/uploads/copiii-care-nu-merg-la-scoala-pt-web.pdf.pdf>.

⁽⁷⁶⁾ <http://proiecte.pmu.ro/web/guest/peti;jsessionid=105FE2132DDD14FA41FD6692BEEDE563>

⁽⁷⁷⁾ <http://proiecte.pmu.ro/web/guest/prel>

⁽⁷⁸⁾ <http://www.edu.ro/index.php/articles/c344/>

⁽⁷⁹⁾ <http://www.edu.ro/index.php/articles/c341/-%20and%20http://banideliceu.edu.ro/>

- implementing the Integrated Information System of Education in Romania (IISER), developed within a project funded between 2007 and 2013 by the European Social Fund to enhance planning and monitoring of the education system and to provide a tool for monitoring students at risk of early leaving at local level;
- implementing the educational contract, which aims at optimising the education process by engaging and empowering parents and students in students' education;
- extending programmes such as 'A second chance' (*A doua șansă*), especially in rural areas and areas with Roma population;

2. Recent policies and measures

All policies and measures aimed at tackling early leaving are currently being developed as part of the future comprehensive strategy.

Specific targeted measures for groups at risk are focused on students with socially disadvantaged and minority/Roma backgrounds, as well as on students with special educational needs.

3. Recent ELVET-specific measures

No ELVET specific measures have been identified.

Cross-sector cooperation

Cooperation mechanisms are being developed. The policy areas of employment, youth, social affairs, family, justice and health are involved in cooperating on early leaving under the coordination of the Ministry of Education.

Multi-agency partnerships at local/institutional level involving school heads, teachers, guidance specialists and nurses are well established. Other types of professionals such as psychologists, social workers, youth workers, speech and language specialists, mediators, and local authorities' representatives may also be involved.

Education and career guidance

Education and career guidance is explicitly considered as a prevention, intervention and compensation measure to tackle early leaving.

Guidance is included in primary and secondary curricula as a compulsory separate subject⁽⁸⁰⁾. It is also taught as a separate optional subject. Education and career guidance is also provided by school guidance services through individual and group counselling sessions.

Projects funded by the European Structural Funds, companies and NGOs also offer guidance support. Schools may choose to participate or may get a recommendation from educational authorities to do so (for instance, because of high drop-out rates).

The school staff dealing with education and career guidance are teachers with and without specific training in guidance as well as guidance specialists and psychologists.

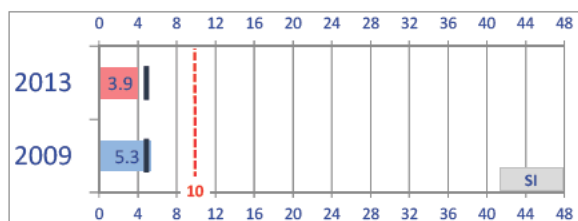
The Resource County Educational Assistance Centres (CJRAE) provide external education and career guidance at county level.

Education and career guidance is being developed as a compensation measure through second chance programmes targeting those who are more than four years older than the regular age for a specific school year.

⁽⁸⁰⁾ 'Personal Development' in primary education; 'Guidance and Counselling' in secondary education.

Slovenia

ELET rate and national target



Source: Eurostat (LFS).

Slovenia has established a national target of decreasing the rate of early leavers to 5 % by 2020.

Definition(s)

Besides the Eurostat definition of early leavers, two national operational definitions are used: a) younger adults who did not successfully complete basic education (lower secondary). This target group is eligible for the Basic School for Adults Programme (*Program osnovne šole za odrasle*); b) unemployed young adults between 15 and 25 years old who do not have any vocational qualification and are not enrolled in a school. This target group is eligible for the Learning for Young Adults Project (*Projektno učenje za mlajše odrasle*).

National data collection

The Statistical Office (SURS) collects statistical data for the Eurostat Labour Force Survey. The results, aggregated at national level, are published each year on the SURS web site ⁽⁸¹⁾

SURS also collects data every year on children who leave education without obtaining the basic school certificate for the National Survey on Basic Education. This data collection is aggregated at top, regional and local levels with no tracking system on students' progression. It is also publicly available ⁽⁸²⁾.

⁽⁸¹⁾ <http://pxweb.stat.si/pxweb/Database/-/Demographics/Demographics.asp>

⁽⁸²⁾ http://pxweb.stat.si/pxweb/Database/-/Demographics/09_education/04_elementary_educatio

Strategy, policies and measures

1. Comprehensive strategy

Slovenia does not have a comprehensive strategy to tackle early leaving.

2. Recent policies and measures

No policies and measures have recently been developed to tackle early leaving.

Specific targeted measures for groups at risk are focused on students with socially disadvantaged, migrant and minority/Roma backgrounds, as well as students with special educational needs (such as students receiving hospital treatments, gifted students, etc.).

3. Recent ELVET-specific measures

- Per capita funding encourages VET providers to retain learners.
- Key quality assurance indicators of VET providers include on-time completion rates, success rates at exams and progress after graduation.
- Second chance programmes such as Production Schools (*Produkcijska šola*) and Youth Project Learning (*Projektno učenje mladih*, PUM) rely on VET pedagogies.

Cross-sector cooperation

The policy areas of employment, social affairs, family, justice and health are traditionally involved in cooperating on early leaving.

Multi-agency partnerships at local/institutional level are well established. They are coordinated by school counselling services (*svetovalna služba*), which assist and cooperate with all participants in the education process, the parents and, when necessary, relevant external partners such as social work centres, the police, public prosecutor and health institutions. The professionals involved are school heads, teachers, and specialists of the school counselling services (psychologists, social workers or speech and language specialists).

Education and career guidance

Education and career guidance is not explicitly considered as a prevention and intervention measure to tackle early leaving but it is explicitly considered as a compensation measure for this purpose.

In primary and secondary education, guidance is both a cross-curricular topic and integrated into several compulsory subjects. It is provided by teachers without specific training and specialists of the school counselling services.

All public basic and upper secondary schools have a school counselling service supplying teachers with information on programmes and school scholarships, public calls, professions and possibility of employment. These services cooperate with school leaders to plan and organise career guidance activities (individual and group career counselling including individualised programmes for students with special educational needs, lectures and discussions with guest lecturers as well as visits to companies).

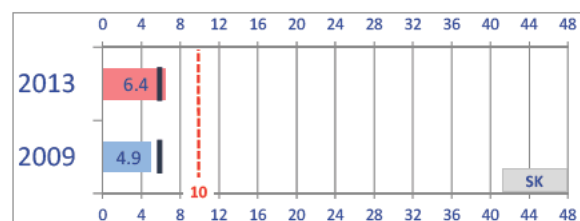
The Employment Service of Slovenia provides external guidance for all via its Centre for Information and Career Guidance (*Center za informiranje in poklicno svetovanje – CIPS*)⁽⁸³⁾.

The Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (SIAE) set up a network of 14 regional Centres for Information and Guidance in Adult Education (ISIO), which also operates as an external provider of education and career guidance for adults (including young adults).

Education and career guidance is also provided as a compensation measure through the Basic School for Adults Programme.

Slovakia

ELET rate and national target



Source: Eurostat (LFS).

Slovakia has established a national target of maintaining the rate of early leavers below 6 % by 2020.

Definition(s)

The Eurostat definition of early leavers is used.

National data collection

The National Statistical Office collects statistical data for the Eurostat Labour Force Survey. The data collection is aggregated at top level.

Strategy, policies and measures

1. Comprehensive strategy

Slovakia does not have a comprehensive strategy to tackle early leaving.

2. Recent policies and measures

No recent policies or measures exist for tackling early leaving.

Specific targeted measures for groups at risk are focused on students with socially disadvantaged and minority/Roma backgrounds.

3. Recent ELVET-specific measures

No ELVET specific activities have been identified but some general retention measures are also applicable to the VET sector. For example, since 2009, all secondary schools have been legally obliged to take action to address high levels of absenteeism.

⁽⁸³⁾ <http://www.ess.gov.si/ncips/cips>

Cross-sector cooperation

Although no official cross-sector cooperation on tackling early leaving exists, there is a tradition of cooperation between the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport and the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs on educational issues, some of them involving aspects related to early leaving.

Multi-agency partnerships at local/institutional level are a legal obligation, although they are not specifically aimed at tackling early leaving. They involve school heads, teachers and guidance specialists.

Education and career guidance

Education and career guidance is not explicitly considered as a prevention, intervention and compensation measure to tackle early leaving.

Guidance is embedded in the primary and secondary curricula as a cross-curricular topic. The staff dealing with education and career guidance are teachers with specific training.

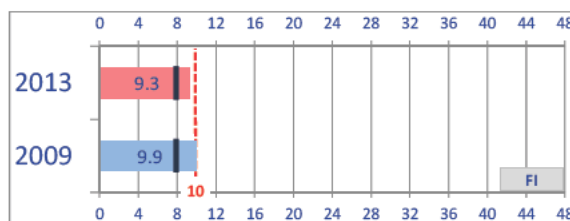
Guidance is also provided via school guidance services by specifically trained teachers. Their task is to provide counselling in solving personal, educational, professional and social issues, as well as counselling in career guidance. These services are funded by local educational authorities under the methodological supervision of the Ministry of Education.

Guidance is provided externally by public centres organised by the district and private ones:

- the Pedagogical and Psychological Counselling and Prevention Centres which provide counselling and prevention care for children, including counselling for their guardians and pedagogical staff. Career guidance is one of the main services in these centres;
- special Pedagogical Counselling Centres, which provide counselling for children with disability, including children with development disorders.

Finland

ELET rate and national target



Source: Eurostat (LFS)

Finland has established a national target of decreasing the rate of early leavers to 8 % by 2020.

Definition(s)

Besides the Eurostat definition of early leavers, two national definitions are used: a) not having an upper secondary school leaving certificate; b) all newly graduated under 30 years of age, out of work and not studying, and young people with only basic education (definition used for the youth guarantee).

National data collection

Statistics Finland is in charge of collecting statistical data for the Eurostat Labour Force Survey. These data are aggregated at national level every month, quarter and year and are made available with the same frequency⁽⁸⁴⁾.

Statistics Finland also collects specific data on transition of comprehensive school graduates to further education and work. The data are produced by combining Statistics Finland's individual-based total data: The data on graduates are produced from Statistics Finland's Register of Completed Education and Degrees; the ones on further education, from Statistics Finland's Student Register; and those on employment and labour force, from Statistics Finland's employment statistics, for which data are gathered from several registers. These data are collected once a year and aggregated at top,

⁽⁸⁴⁾ http://www.stat.fi/til/tyti/index_en.html

regional, local and school levels. They are publicly available on Statistics Finland's web site ⁽⁸⁵⁾ and on *Vipunen*, the local authorities' web site ⁽⁸⁶⁾.

Strategy, policies and measures

1. Comprehensive strategy

Finland does not have a comprehensive strategy to tackle early leaving.

2. Recent policies and measures

Policies and measures that have been recently developed to tackle early leaving include:

- increasing flexibility and permeability of educational pathways aiming at enabling students to create their individual learning pathways so as to raise students' motivation. Vocational training options have been diversified, facilitating, for example, the combination of vocational and upper secondary education qualifications;
- enhancing support for low achievers by re-organising students' support in pre-primary and basic education in order to identify learning difficulties as soon as possible. General support and intensified special support are provided based on multi-professional teams' assessments;
- networking with parents and other actors outside school to prevent school drop-out through student welfare services;
- identifying students who drop out and encouraging them to re-enter education and training through the 'Youth Workshops' and 'Outreach Youth Work' programmes, which offer education and career guidance support for early leavers (see below).

Specific targeted measures for groups at risk are focused on students with migrant and minority/Roma backgrounds.

3. Recent ELVET-specific measures

- Career Start (*Ammattistartti*) programmes provide transition support for young people who did not find a place in upper secondary VET immediately after completion of compulsory education. The goal is to give an opportunity to explore different career, VET course and employment options and motivate participants to continue their studies.
- Employers who take on a young person without upper secondary level qualification (an early leaver) as an apprentice receive a higher than average wage subsidy.
- A programme for increasing completion rates in VET (*Läpäisyn tehostamisen ohjelma*) was set up in 2011. It provides funding for local and regional projects to test and implement ELVET measures.
- A small portion of the per capita VET student funding is linked to qualification completion and drop-out rates.

Cross-sector cooperation

Cooperation mechanisms on early leaving are being developed in the frame of the Youth Guarantee. They involve the following ministries: Employment and Economy; Education and Culture; Social Affairs and Health.

According to the Youth Act (72/2006), all municipalities must have a youth guidance and service network for the general planning and implementation of cooperation amongst local authorities. These networks must include representatives from education, social, health and youth services, as well as labour and police administrations, and vocational training providers active in the municipality.

Multi-agency partnerships at local/institutional level involve school heads, teachers, guidance specialists, psychologists, social workers and youth workers. Labour market partners and employers may also contribute, especially for the youth guarantee scheme.

⁽⁸⁵⁾ In English: http://www.stat.fi/til/kkesk/index_en.html.

⁽⁸⁶⁾ In Finnish only: <http://vipunen.csc.fi/fi-fi/ohjeet/Pages/default.aspx>.

Education and career guidance

Education and career guidance is explicitly considered as a prevention, intervention and compensation measure to tackle early leaving.

In primary education, career guidance is embedded in the curriculum as a cross-curricular topic and delivered by all teachers. In lower and upper secondary education, guidance is in the curricula as a compulsory separate subject ('Educational and Vocational Guidance'). In addition, school counselling services are available in secondary education. School staff involved are teachers with and without specific training.

Guidance and counselling in basic education (primary and lower secondary education) is provided both individually and in a group. Guidance and counselling promote the acquisition of lifelong career management skills as a continuum focusing on self-knowledge, education and training options and the world of work.

Experiences at working places are included in the compulsory curriculum for students in years 7-9 (13 and 15 years old) in order to help them choose their education and profession and to increase the status and appreciation of working life. Other short periods of work experience (1 to 10 days) can also be implemented (e.g.: familiarisation with the work of school staff, experience at a parent's work place, etc.).

Guidance for young people is also provided by the eCounselling and Guidance Office on the Internet (Facebook, Messenger, Skype), where individualised guidance is available.

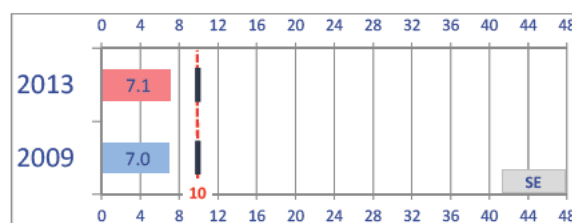
The Summer Counselling and Guidance Office targets young people who have not obtained, at the end of their basic education, a study place via the National Joint Application System managed by the Finnish National Board of Education. Education and career counsellors help them find a place in vocational training: Comprehensive information on the different options is provided through the web site as well as individualised support from the guidance counsellors.

'Youth Workshops' and the 'Outreach Youth Work' are compensation programmes that include education and career guidance. The Youth Workshops are both a physical environment and a multi-professional guidance method and are not part of the official education system; work-based training and everyday life skills are provided there in a learning-by-doing methodology. The Outreach Youth Work closely cooperates with the Youth Workshops, aiming at reaching young people under 29 of age who are not in education, training or employment. Other regional projects exist offering education and training services as compensation measures.

According to the national lifelong guidance strategy recently endorsed by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture and the Finnish Ministry of Employment and the economy, a new type of one-stop centres (*Ohjaamo* centres) will be established in 2014-2020. The aim is to develop a multi-sectoral service point, which provides guidance and support for young people. The short term goal is to support young people returning to education or apprenticeship with an aim to a long-term employability skills development. The one-stop centres will be supplemented by integrated online career services.

Sweden

ELET rate and national target



Source: Eurostat (LFS).

Sweden has established a national target of maintaining the rate of early leavers below 10 % by 2020.

Definition(s)

The Swedish National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*) does not define early leaving. However, in the 2014 National Reform Program, early leaving is defined as 'the proportion of 18–24 year-olds who neither have completed upper secondary education nor are participating in any form of study'. The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (*Sveriges kommuner och landsting* – SKL) also uses another definition: young people at the age of 20 not having completed upper secondary school (i.e. not having achieved a final grade and/or a school diploma at that level).

National data collection

Statistics Sweden is in charge of the statistical data collection for the Eurostat Labour Force Survey. Data are aggregated at top and regional levels⁽⁸⁷⁾.

Several other data collections on early leavers are being carried out:

- the Swedish National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*) provides yearly statistics on early leavers from upper secondary education and the proportion of students having completed upper secondary school within three or four years⁽⁸⁸⁾;
- Statistics Sweden provides statistics on the number of people within different age groups who are not studying as well as statistics on the education levels for the different age groups⁽⁸⁹⁾;
- the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions carries out a yearly comparison between municipalities concerning the proportion of students having completed

upper secondary school within three or four years⁽⁹⁰⁾.

All these data collections are collected once a year, aggregated at top, regional and local levels and publicly available.

Strategy, policies and measures

1. Comprehensive strategy

Sweden does not have a comprehensive strategy to tackle early leaving.

2. Recent policies and measures

Policies and measures that have been recently developed to tackle early leaving include the identification of drop-outs and their encouragement to re-enter education through, for example, the 'Folk High School Initiative' (*Folkhögskolesatsningen*). This government initiative offers young people a three-month course aimed at preparing them for returning to or starting studies at upper secondary level.

However, as municipalities are in charge of education and develop their own policies, there is a great variety of measures developed at local level.

Specific targeted measures for groups at risk are focused on students with migrant background.

3. Recent ELVET-specific measures

No ELVET specific initiatives have been identified but on-going reforms of VET (that concern preparatory VET training and work-based learning models in particular) are linked to the ELVET agenda.

The study allowance available for any upper secondary level student (academic or vocational) may be removed if a student plays truant. The threat of removing the allowance is considered to be an incentive to remain in learning.

⁽⁸⁷⁾ <http://www.scb.se/sv/Hitta-statistik/Statistik-efter-amne/Arbetsmarknad/Arbetskraftsundersokningar/Arbetskraftsundersokningarna-AKU/23263/Beskrivning-av-statistiken/>

⁽⁸⁸⁾ <http://www.skolverket.se/statistik-och-utvardering/-statistik-i-tabeller/gymnasieskola/skolor-och-elever>

⁽⁸⁹⁾ <http://www.scb.se/sv/Hitta-statistik/Statistik-efter-amne/Utbildning-och-forskning/Befolkningens-utbildning/Befolkningens-studiedeltagande/9604/9611/>

⁽⁹⁰⁾ http://www.skl.se/vi_arbetar_med/oppnjamforelser

Cross-sector cooperation

Municipalities decide on the organisation of multi-agency partnerships at local/institutional level and there is therefore a great variety of practices. However, they have the legal obligation to involve school heads, teachers, guidance specialists, psychologists, social and youth workers, therapists, nurses, speech and language specialists, special needs education specialists and physicians.

Cooperation mechanisms are also being tested within the *Unga In*⁽⁹¹⁾ and *Plug In*⁽⁹²⁾ projects, supported by the European Social Fund.

Education and career guidance

Education and career guidance is not explicitly considered as a prevention and intervention measure to tackle early leaving but it is considered as a compensation measure within the youth guarantee scheme.

Education and career guidance is not embedded in the curriculum but upper secondary schools are obliged to provide for it. Primary and secondary students have access to school counselling services. These are provided by education and career counsellors specially trained on this issue.

All teachers, although not specifically trained for this, are also responsible for providing guidance. They are expected to support individual students when they make choices over their further education, assist in establishing contacts with schools that will be receiving students, as well as with organisations, companies and others who can help enrich the school's activities and establish it in the surrounding society.

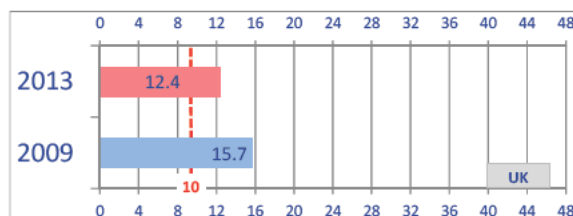
Education and career guidance is provided as a compensation measure within adult education programmes that enable early leavers to re-integrate education and training.

⁽⁹¹⁾ <http://www.arbetsformedlingen.se/ungain>

⁽⁹²⁾ <http://www.skl.se/skolakulturfrutid/skolaforskola/sklssatsningarutvecklingskolan/pluginfarregymnasie-avhopp.2132.html>

United Kingdom – England

ELET rate and national target



Source: Eurostat (LFS).

The United Kingdom did not set a national quantitative target for reducing the rate of early leavers as part of the National Reform Programme. However England has committed to reduce the number of early leavers based on a national definition (NEETs: see below).

Definition(s)

The term used is 'Not in Education, Employment or Training' (NEET). A person is considered NEET if they are aged 16 to 24 and not in education, employment or training⁽⁹³⁾.

In England, full participation in education for 16 to 17 year olds is envisaged by 2015⁽⁹⁴⁾. The Government has committed to support further increases in participation for young people aged 16 to 19, while moving towards raising the participation age to 18 by 2015.

National data collection

The Statistical First Release (SFR) 'Participation in Education, Training and Employment by 16-18 Year Olds in England' is the definitive measure of participation at ages 16-18. It combines data from a number of sources (including the school census, further education

⁽⁹³⁾ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/specific/labour-market/articles-and-reports/young-people-who-are-neet.pdf>

⁽⁹⁴⁾ See 'Building Engagement, Building Futures' at <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/HMG-00195-2012.pdf>.

individualised learning records, the Eurostat Labour Force Survey (LFS) and Office for National Statistics population estimates). It is made publicly available ⁽⁹⁵⁾.

In addition to the SFR, a quarterly bulletin ⁽⁹⁶⁾ provides with more timely and detailed (but less statistically robust) NEET statistics.

Since May 2013, the Office for National Statistics (ONS), also in charge of the LFS data collection, has published a bulletin on NEETs with comparable data for all of the UK based on the Eurostat LFS. The data are aggregated at top level and made available ⁽⁹⁷⁾ annually.

Strategy, policies and measures

1. Comprehensive strategy

'Building Engagement, Building Futures' sets out the strategy to maximise the participation of 16-24 year olds in education, training and work. It sets how existing reforms to schools, vocational education, skills and welfare provision will all help to increase the number of young people who are engaged in education, training and work. It also sets out the measures over and above these, which will be needed to help the most vulnerable. These new measures include:

- giving parents and families the support they need to encourage and help their children to develop, learn and participate at all ages with access to high quality early years education focused on preparing children for future education and learning;
- raising the participation age to 17 in 2013 and 18 in 2015 to ensure that all young people have the opportunity to engage in high quality education and training that prepares them for higher education and successful employment;

⁽⁹⁵⁾ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/participation-in-education-training-and-employment-age-16-to-18>

⁽⁹⁶⁾ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/neet-statistics-quarterly-brief-january-to-march-2014>

⁽⁹⁷⁾ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/lms/young-people-not-in-education--employment-or-training--neets-/may-2013/statistical-bulletin.html>

- Creating new coherent vocational programmes of study for 16-19 year olds, offering breadth and depth, including English and maths for those who have not reached General Certificate of Secondary Education and substantive workplace placement;
- further targeting apprenticeships on younger adults, ensuring consistently high quality across all apprenticeships, offering incentives for small businesses to take on a young apprentice and cutting back on bureaucracy to encourage more employers to join the programme;
- placing a duty on schools to secure independent careers guidance for all 12-18 years olds so they are inspired and motivated to fulfil their potential;
- helping local partners to provide effective and coordinated services that support allying people, including the most vulnerable;
- developing tools (Risk of NEET indicators) to establish the factors associated with those who disengage post-16 which will enable schools and local services to target their support more effectively;
- Establishing a new Youth Contract which is a package of schemes aimed at helping young people into sustained employment.

2. Recent policies and measures

The *Rigour and Responsive in Skills* policy paper ⁽⁹⁸⁾, which set out plans to update the skills system to make it more rigorous and responsive to the needs of employers and learners, introduced the traineeship programme. It will provide rigorous and purposeful pre-employment training for young people with no experience of work and poor basic skills. Lasting between six weeks and six months, the core content of the programme is a high quality work placement, work preparation training, and training in English and maths.

⁽⁹⁸⁾ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rigour-and-responsiveness-in-skills>

Specific targeted policies and measures for specific groups at risk exist for students from socially disadvantaged background, students at risk of disengaging (e.g.: looked after children and young people, those with health problems, young carers, young people with behavioural issues, substance abusers, care leavers or young people who are homeless).

3. Recent ELVET-specific measures

Provider funding depends on the success rate of learners and apprentices. This encourages providers to set up support measures to prevent ELVET.

Cross-sector cooperation

Cooperation mechanisms are being developed together with the employment, youth, social affairs, family, justice and health policy areas. Sector cooperation is mentioned in 'Building Futures, Building Engagement', jointly published by the Department for Education, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the Department for Work and Pensions. This document stresses the importance of the participation of a range of actors from local government to the voluntary and community sector (VCS) in delivering the measures. The Cabinet Office, which supports the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, ensuring effective development, coordination and implementation of policy and operations across all government departments, works with the Department for Education to coordinate cross-government actions to increase opportunities for young people and help them achieve their potential.

Although no formal coordinating body has been set up to follow-up the strategy, local authorities are expected to play a key role in coordinating partnerships at local level. They have as a statutory duty to secure suitable education and training provision for the 16-19 year olds.

Multi-agency partnerships at local/institutional level are well established and involve professionals such as school heads, teachers, guidance specialists, psychologists, social

workers, youth workers, as well as speech and language specialists.

Education and career guidance

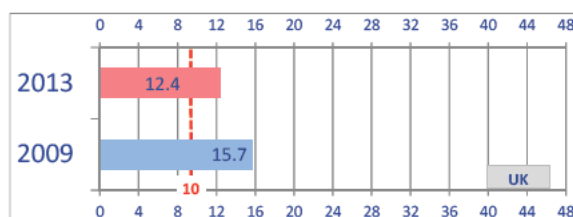
Education and career guidance is explicitly considered as a prevention, intervention and compensation measure to tackle early leaving.

Education and career guidance is embedded in the curriculum. There is a statutory duty on schools to ensure that all pupils are provided with independent careers guidance from year 8 (12-13 year olds) to year 13 (17-18 year olds) but schools decide on how it is delivered. It must however be impartial, cover the full range of education or training options and be in the best interests of the pupil.

The staff responsible for guidance provision are teachers (specifically trained and not) as well as counsellors. Provision can include web-based and telephone services and/or face-to-face guidance from a specialist provider.

United Kingdom – Wales

ELET rate and national target



Source: Eurostat (LFS).

The United Kingdom did not set a national quantitative target for reducing the rate of early leavers as part of the National Reform Programme. However Wales has committed to reduce the number of early leavers based on a national definition (NEETs: see below).

Definition(s)

The term used is 'Not in Education, Employment or Training' (NEET). A person is considered NEET if they are aged 16 to 24 and not in education, employment or training ⁽⁹⁹⁾.

In Wales, the number of NEETs aged 16 to 18 should be reduced to 9.0 % by 2017 ⁽¹⁰⁰⁾.

National data collection

The Statistical First Release (SFR) 'Participation of young people in education and the labour market' is the definitive measure for estimates of NEET in Wales. It combines data from a number of sources (including the school census, Lifelong Learning Wales Records, the Eurostat Labour Force Survey (LFS) and Office for National Statistics population estimates). It is made publicly available once a year ⁽¹⁰¹⁾.

In addition to the SFR, a quarterly NEET bulletin ⁽¹⁰²⁾ provides with more timely and detailed (but less statistically robust) NEET statistics.

Since May 2013, the Office for National Statistics (ONS), also in charge of the LFS data collection, has published a bulletin on NEETs with comparable data for all of the UK based on the Eurostat LFS. The data are aggregated at top level and made available ⁽¹⁰³⁾ annually.

All data are provided at top or local level.

⁽⁹⁹⁾ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/specific/labour-market/articles-and-reports/young-people-who-are-neet.pdf>

⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dsilg/publications/-socialjustice/120625stackpovplanen.pdf>

⁽¹⁰¹⁾ <http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/-participation-young-people-education-labour-market/?lang=en>

⁽¹⁰²⁾ <http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/young-people-not-education-employment-training/?lang=en>

⁽¹⁰³⁾ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/lms/young-people-not-in-education--employment-or-training--neets--may-2013/statistical-bulletin.html>

Strategy, policies and measures

1. Comprehensive strategy

The 'Youth Engagement and Progression Framework' ⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ brings together critical elements of the NEET (for 11-25 year olds) reduction plan together in one place with a two year timetable (from 2013 to 2015) for implementation. Key elements of the framework and associated actions are:

- identifying young people most at risk of disengagement;
- better brokerage and coordination of support;
- stronger tracking and transitions of young people through the system;
- ensuring provision meets the needs of young people;
- strengthening employability skills and opportunities for employment;
- supporting young people at risk of becoming NEET with better information, advice and guidance and providing them with a named lead worker to ensure that support is delivered in a joined up and coordinated way;
- ensuring all actors work together to assure successful implementation of the plan.

The Framework also links to other areas of the Welsh Government policy. In particular, 'Building a Brighter Future: An Early Years and Childcare Plan' ⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ which sets out measures to address potential causes of disengagement at the earliest opportunity.

2. Recent policies and measures

All the main policies and measures related to early leaving are included in the initiatives mentioned above.

⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/-skillsandtraining/youthengagement/?lang=en>

⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/-earlyyears/home/building-a-brighter-future-early-years-and-childcare-plan/?lang=en>

There are no targeted policies and measures for specific groups at risk.

3. Recent ELVET-specific measures

A new 'Traineeship programme' for 16-18 year olds has been introduced. It is a flexible programme providing support young people need to progress to further education, an apprenticeship or a job.

Cross-sector cooperation

Cooperation mechanisms are being developed together with the employment, youth, social affairs, family, justice and health policy areas. Sector cooperation is mentioned in the strategy document for Wales, 'Youth Engagement and Progression Framework: Implementation plan', which sets out the roles expected of the different actors to participate in the implementation of the strategy.

Although no formal coordinating body has been set up to follow-up the strategy, local authorities are expected to play a key role in coordinating partnerships at local level; they have as a statutory duty to secure suitable education and training provision for the 16-19 year olds.

Multi-agency partnerships at local/institutional level are well established and involve professionals such as school heads, teachers, guidance specialists, psychologists, social workers, youth workers, as well as speech and language specialists.

Education and career guidance

Education and career guidance is explicitly considered as a prevention, intervention and compensation measure to tackle early leaving.

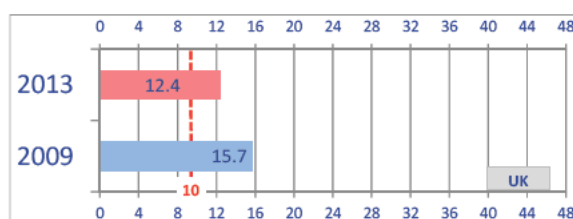
Education and career guidance is embedded in the curriculum in lower and upper secondary general education. 'Careers and the World of Work' is taught as a separate subject for all students aged 11 to 19. Learning providers should refer to the framework document developed for this purpose and also benefit from

guidance and tools⁽¹⁰⁶⁾. Further support and training are provided by Careers Wales⁽¹⁰⁷⁾.

School staff involved in guidance provision are teachers (specialised in education and career guidance or not).

United Kingdom – Northern Ireland

ELET rate and national target



Source: Eurostat (LFS).

The United Kingdom did not set a national quantitative target for reducing the rate of early leavers as part of the National Reform Programme. Northern Ireland has not fixed any specific target but has set an aspiration that young people will all have access to and avail themselves of training opportunities.

Definition(s)

The term used is 'Not in Education, Employment or Training' (NEET). A person is considered NEET if they are aged 16 to 24 and not in education, employment or training⁽¹⁰⁸⁾.

⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ See 'Careers and the World of Work: A Framework for 11 to 19-year-olds in Wales' at <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dcells/publications/110921careersworldworkframeworken.pdf> and 'Careers and the world of work: Supplementary Guidance' at <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dcells/publications/110921careersworkguidanceen.pdf>.

⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ <http://www.careerswales.com>

⁽¹⁰⁸⁾ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/specific/labour-market/articles-and-reports/young-people-who-are-neet.pdf>

National data collection

In Northern Ireland, NEET figures are based on the Labour Force Survey (LFS).

Since May 2013, the Office for National Statistics (ONS), also in charge of the LFS data collection, has published a bulletin on NEETs with comparable data for all of the UK based on the Eurostat LFS. The data are aggregated at top level and made available ¹⁰⁹ annually.

Strategy, policies and measures

1. Comprehensive strategy

'Pathways to Success: Preventing exclusion and promoting participation' is the Northern Ireland strategy designed to address comprehensively the issue of young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). It joins up actions being taken across the Northern Ireland Executive to prevent young people falling into the NEET category in the first place with measures to re-engage those who have left school but are not in any other form of education, training or employment. The main measures include:

- steps to improve leadership, co-ordination and information;
- actions to prevent young people becoming NEET; include the Executive's major initiatives to improve early years provision and to raise standards in all schools, improving outcomes in literacy and numeracy for low achievers, collaboration between schools and further education colleges in delivering the Entitlement Framework to ensure that every young person has the opportunity through the education and training system to achieve their potential, range of health and social care programmes, community family support programmes, and early, effective high

quality careers advice, information advice and guidance;

- re-engaging 16-18 year olds who are NEET through a number of initiatives to provide mentors for individuals and support them towards and through opportunities to resume learning and progress into work;
- increasing flexibility and permeability of educational pathways;
- developing a Northern Ireland tracking system, which supports early identification, up-to-date evidence and tracking over time for those young people who are in or who might enter the NEET category;
- improving leadership and co-ordination of actions delivered by government departments and statutory agencies, local government, employers, and the voluntary and community sector;
- re-engaging 18-24 year olds who are unemployed through opportunities for work experience and skills development.

2. Recent policies and measures

All the main policies and measures related to early leaving are included in the initiatives mentioned above.

Specific targeted policies and measures for specific groups at risk exist for students from socially disadvantaged background and students at risk of disengaging (e.g.: looked after children and young people, those with health problems, young carers, young people with behavioural issues, substance abusers, care leavers or young people who are homeless).

3. Recent ELVET-specific measures

Companies can receive a bonus if an apprentice successfully completes the programme.

Cross-sector cooperation

Cooperation mechanisms are being developed. Sector cooperation is mentioned in the strategy document for Northern Ireland, 'Pathways to

⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/lms/young-people-not-in-education--employment-or-training--neets-/may-2013/statistical-bulletin.html>

Success: Preventing exclusion and promoting participation of Young People', which proposes arrangements to ensure that there is effective collaboration between all areas involved to ensure a successful NEET strategy.

Multi-agency partnerships at local/institutional level are well established and involve professionals such as school heads, teachers, guidance specialists, psychologists, social workers, youth workers, as well as speech and language specialists.

Education and career guidance

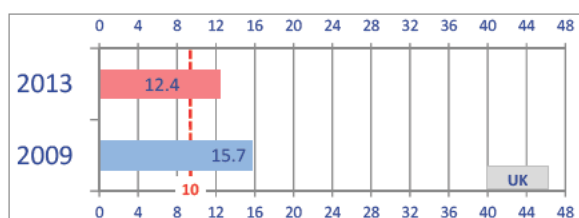
Education and career guidance is explicitly considered as a prevention, intervention and compensation measure to tackle early leaving.

In lower secondary education and the first two years of upper secondary (age 11-16), guidance is embedded in the curriculum and is taught as an integrated topic, within 'Learning for Life and Work' by teachers specifically trained or not.

In upper secondary education, students must have access to individual guidance provided by career specialists in school and/or through the Northern Ireland Careers Service.

United Kingdom – Scotland

ELET rate and national target



Source: Eurostat (LFS).

The United Kingdom did not set a national quantitative target for reducing the rate of early leavers, as part of the National Reform Programme. However Scotland is committed to reduce the rate of early leavers to 10 %.

Definition(s)

Besides the Eurostat definition of early leavers, Scotland also uses their own definition of early leavers: students who leave school before reaching the age of 16.

National data collection

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) records the Qualification Attainment of Scottish School Leavers. The data is quarterly updated and aggregated at top and local levels. A report on qualification attainment is published each year⁽¹¹⁰⁾. Skills Development Scotland (SDS) collects twice a year the Destination of School Leavers. The combined SDS/SQA data are aggregated both at top and local level and publicly available⁽¹¹¹⁾.

Local authorities are responsible for gathering data on attendance, absence and exclusion once a year (exclusion) or bi-annually (attendance and absence). This information, aggregated at top, local and school levels, is collected by the Scottish Government and published bi-annually⁽¹¹²⁾.

Scotland has designed a national indicator to follow-up the proportion of young people in learning, training or work, based on SDS data: percentage of school leavers in positive sustained destination (i.e. learning, training or work) nine months after leaving school. This indicator is publicly available⁽¹¹³⁾.

⁽¹¹⁰⁾ See statistics reports at <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/42397.html>.

⁽¹¹¹⁾ <http://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/-statistics/school-leaver-destination-returns/> and <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/leavedestla/folleavedestat>

⁽¹¹²⁾ See the sections on 'Attendance and Absence' and 'Exclusions' in the Summary Statistics for Schools in Scotland, at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/Summarystatsforschools> and the supplementary data set for 'Attendance and Absence' at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/PubAttendanceAbsence>.

⁽¹¹³⁾ See the National Indicator at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/Performance/scotPeforms/indicator/youngpeople>.

Since May 2013, the Office for National Statistics (ONS), also in charge of the LFS data collection, has published a bulletin on NEETs with comparable data for all of the UK based on the Eurostat Labour Force Survey. The data are aggregated at top level and made available ⁽¹¹⁴⁾ annually.

Strategy, policies and measures

1. Comprehensive strategy

There is a strong policy focus in Scotland on getting young people aged 16+ to engage in education, training or the labour market. This is done through the overarching 'More Choices, More Chances' strategic framework for improving outcomes for all young people and focusing on reducing the number of 16-19 year olds not in education, employment or training. Strategies included under this umbrella are:

- 'Opportunities for All' ⁽¹¹⁵⁾ – an explicit commitment to an offer of an appropriate place in learning or training for every 16-19 year old not currently in education, employment or training. It focuses on supporting young people who have disengaged, seeking to re-engage them with appropriate learning or training from their 16th until their 20th birthday.
- Delivery of 'Opportunities for All' is supported by a 'Post-16 Transitions Policy and Practice Framework' ⁽¹¹⁶⁾, which reflects the importance of robust transition planning at both initial and subsequent transitions, along with a 'Data Practice Framework' ⁽¹¹⁷⁾, that provides detail on how the Scottish Government can ensure the consistent identification, tracking and monitoring of all 16-19 year olds.

⁽¹¹⁴⁾ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/lms/young-people-not-in-education--employment-or-training--neets-/may-2013/statistical-bulletin.html>

⁽¹¹⁵⁾ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0040/00408815.pdf>

⁽¹¹⁶⁾ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2012/11/3248>

⁽¹¹⁷⁾ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2012/11/2173>

The Scottish Government is currently refreshing the youth employment strategy (expected to be published in November 2014). Improved information sharing processes in Scotland have enabled young people to be tracked until their 20th birthday as they progress through learning and training to support delivery of the Opportunities for All commitment.

2. Recent policies and measures

All the main policies and measures related to early leaving are included in the initiatives mentioned above.

Targeted policies and measures for specific groups at risk exist for students from socially disadvantaged background and students at risk of disengaging (e.g.: looked after children and young people, those with health problems, young carers, young people with behavioural issues, substance abusers, care leavers or young people who are homeless).

3. Recent ELVET-specific measures

Funding related ELVET measures exist. For example, incentives are available for enterprises to take on apprentices who have been made redundant elsewhere and the Scottish colleges funding model is related to retention, so funding levels are contingent upon retaining learners.

Cross-sector cooperation

Cooperation mechanisms are being developed. The 'Post-16 Transitions' framework ⁽¹¹⁸⁾ presents the government's views on co-ordination strategies to support 16-19 year olds transitions to education, training and work. All relevant policy areas are involved in cooperating on early leaving. All relevant professionals are required to participate in multi-agency partnerships.

The Scottish Government's 'Opportunities for All' is delivered through a local authority-led multi-agency partnership approach, at local level. Young people are supported to access the learning that is right for them, delivered by a range of providers.

⁽¹¹⁸⁾ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0040/00408819.pdf>

No coordinating body has been formally set-up. However, the 'Opportunities for All' commitment specifies that the early leaving coordination is a joint responsibility of local partners.

Local partnerships are well established and at the heart of the Scottish strategy. All local authorities have developed Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs). Next to statutory partners, other organisations are involved: JobCentre Plus, Colleges and SDS. These CPPs have developed Youth Employment Action Plans, in conjunction with SDS, identifying the role of partners, local provision and the priority cohort of young people unemployed locally. A first audit report on the role of CPPs was conducted in 2013 ⁽¹¹⁹⁾.

In 2013/14, national and local governments set up Single Outcome Agreements (SOAs), encouraging public services to work with private and voluntary sector partners. SOAs will enable cross-sector cooperation on early leaving to be monitored and evaluated.

Education and career guidance

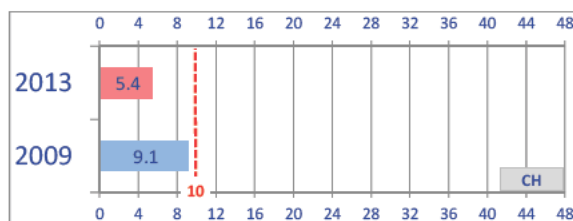
Education and career guidance is explicitly considered as a prevention, intervention and compensation measure.

Guidance is embedded in the curriculum as a cross-curricular topic in primary and secondary education. Teachers without specific training are responsible for ensuring that career management skills are learnt across subject areas. They are supported by the services of career advisors from Career Information, Advice and Guidance (Career IAG), which intervene in secondary schools, based on agreement with the local authority education departments. Career advisors also visit each school during the year to provide for individual guidance. Their services are available (including on-line and by phone) to all age groups and they offer tailored support services for people at risk, including early leavers.

⁽¹¹⁹⁾ http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/docs/central/2013/nr_130320_improving_cpp.pdf

Switzerland

ELET rate and national target



Source: Eurostat (LFS).

Switzerland, as a non-EU Member State, was not requested to set a national quantitative target for reducing the rate of early leavers.

Definition(s)

Early leavers are not officially defined in Switzerland. But, in the 2011 Common Education Policy objectives for the Swiss Education Area, 'Taking optimal advantage of opportunities' (*Chancen optimal nutzen/Valorisation optimale des chances*) ⁽¹²⁰⁾, the concept used is 'early leavers from education and training', i.e. students who leave school without having completed upper secondary education.

This document includes the objective of increasing the proportion of upper-secondary graduates among the less than 25 year olds to 95 %.

National data collection

The Federal Statistical Office (FSO) is in charge of collecting statistical data for the Eurostat Labour Force Survey. This data collection, aggregated at top-level, is published ⁽¹²¹⁾ as complementary information to the upper secondary qualification rate (see below).

The FSO is also in charge of collecting data via a student database every year and compiling it with national data from the Populations and

⁽¹²⁰⁾ http://edudoc.ch/record/96061/files/erklaerung_30052011_d.pdf

⁽¹²¹⁾ <http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/de/index/themen/15/17/blank/01.indicator.404205.4014.html>

Households Statistics (STATPOP) in order to provide the upper secondary qualification rate. This indicator is only aggregated at national level and is publicly available ⁽¹²²⁾.

In contrast to the Eurostat definition, persons without an upper secondary qualification and studying only in non-formal education are also counted as early leavers.

Strategy, policies and measures

1. Comprehensive strategy

Switzerland does not have a comprehensive strategy to tackle early leaving.

2. Recent policies and measures

The Confederation recently launched an initiative to prevent and fight against poverty (*Nationales Programm zur Bekämpfung von Armut/programme national de lutte contre la pauvreté*) ⁽¹²³⁾. This 2014-2018 initiative focuses among others on early childhood education and care; support for students at the transition to and during VET; second chance education.

The new language-region curricula reinforces education and career guidance in secondary lower education by organising it more, including more in specific modules instead of teaching it as a cross-curricular topic only.

The 'VET Case Management' is a national project (2008-2015), legally backed up in the federal law on VET and implemented in all cantons. The objective is to identify vulnerable young people at an early stage and support them in a coordinated and structured way.

Since 2010 the Confederation and the cantons jointly monitor the Swiss education system. A focus is put on gathering statistical data and research findings in order to better identify groups at risk of early leaving.

⁽¹²²⁾ <http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/de/index/-themen/15/17/blank/01.indicator.405101.4085.html>

⁽¹²³⁾ <http://www.bsv.admin.ch/themen/gesellschaft/-00074/01973/index.html?lang=de> or <http://www.bsv.admin.ch/themen/gesellschaft/00074/01973/index.html?lang=fr>

Specific targeted measures for groups at risk are focused on students with socially disadvantaged and migrant backgrounds and students with special educational needs.

3. Recent ELVET-specific measures

ELVET specific measures exist such as the 'VET Case Management' programme (see above) and supplying an adequate number of high quality apprenticeships.

Cross-sector cooperation

The policy areas of education and employment have a tradition of cooperation. The policy areas of youth, social affairs, family and justice also cooperate within projects.

The Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK) plays a pivot role in addressing early leaving.

The political platform, 'Tripartite Agglomerationskonferenz/Conférence tripartite sur les agglomérations' (TAK/CTA), aims at reducing institutional barriers between state-levels (the Confederation, cantons and communities). The TAK/CTA has published several recommendations for the education sector, some of them relevant for tackling early leaving.

The Inter-institutional Cooperation ⁽¹²⁴⁾ (*Inter-institutionelle Zusammenarbeit/ Collaboration interinstitutionnelle – IIZ/CII*) is a tool to develop inter-institutional cooperation and define formal and informal models of collaboration between several institutions. This applies among others to measures for quickly and sustainably (re-) integrating persons in need into the education system or the labour market, coordinating the involvement of institutions active in different fields (social affairs, education, employment, health and those dealing with the integration of migrants).

The 'VET Case Management' (see above) is a national project, demanding for a multi-agency approach (education, social affairs and

⁽¹²⁴⁾ <http://www.iiz.ch/dynasite.cfm?dsmid=111883>

employment), is an example of this IIZ coordination. One of the project's main features is to make better and more efficient use of existing services by ensuring a better coordination among them.

Multi-agency partnerships at local/institutional level are well established. They involve teachers, school heads, guidance specialists, psychologists, social workers, youth workers, and speech and language specialists.

Education and career guidance

Education and career guidance is explicitly considered as a prevention, intervention and compensation measure to tackle early leaving.

In lower secondary education, education and career guidance is embedded in the curriculum but each canton is free to decide on how it is delivered. At upper secondary level, guidance is usually not part of the curriculum but schools provide it in close cooperation with external specialised centres. These services have permanent offices in most of the schools in the French-speaking part of the country.

Staff dealing with education and career guidance, mainly in lower secondary education, are teachers with and without specific training.

As a rule, guidance includes close collaboration with external specialised centres for vocational and career guidance (*Zentrum für Berufs-, Studien- und Laufbahnberatung/Office de l'orientation professionnelle, universitaire et de carrière*). At all times individual counselling is available at these specialised centres.

When education and career guidance is not provided inside the class it is available externally, in specialised centres at canton level.

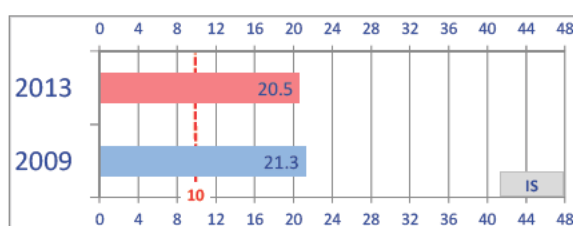
Concerning compensation, the following measures are available:

- the 'VET Case Management' programme (see above) is provided by specialists to young people at risk entering vocational education, both during their education and when they should enter the labour market;

- the 'Motivation Semesters' is a labour market programme specially designed for unemployed young people with the aim of offering them a fixed six month structure to allow them choosing their vocational pathways;
- the federal law on VET provides adults with second chance possibilities to attain a VET certificate (abridged VET; direct examination to regular final VET examinations; validation of prior learning).

Iceland

ELET rate and national target



Source: Eurostat (LFS).

Iceland, as a non-EU Member State, was not requested to set a national quantitative target for reducing the rate of early leavers. However, one of the 19 objectives in the Iceland 2020 governmental policy statement for the economy and community, adopted in 2011, is to reduce the percentage of people, aged 25-64, who have not received any formal secondary education, from 30 % to 10 % by 2020

Definition(s)

Besides the Eurostat definition of early leavers, a national definition is used: not having an upper secondary school leaving certificate.

National data collection

Statistics Iceland is in charge of collecting statistical data for the Eurostat Labour Force Survey. This information is aggregated at top and regional levels and made publicly available every other year ⁽¹²⁵⁾.

⁽¹²⁵⁾ http://www.statice.is/Statistics/Wages_income_and-

Statistics Iceland also uses a student register to collect data on drop-outs in upper secondary education. The data is collected once a year, aggregated at school level and made publicly available ⁽¹²⁶⁾.

Strategy, policies and measures

1. Comprehensive strategy

Iceland does not have a comprehensive strategy to tackle early leaving.

2. Recent policies and measures

Policies and measures that have been recently developed to tackle early leaving include:

- collaborative initiatives, such as the 'Forward' project (*Afram*) in the city of Reykjavik, where compulsory school counsellors, upper secondary school counsellors and the municipality social services project work together to provide individual support to students (and especially to those identified as at risk of dropping out) in order to facilitate a smooth transition between school levels. Specific support for students with learning difficulties or special needs has also been enhanced;
- reforms of the second chance education system are tested, as in the 2011 'Education can Work' project (*Nám er vinnandi vegur*). Its objective is to enhance access to diversified studies for those who are not enrolled in secondary education and are unemployed (with a focus on vocational education and training), in order to increase the number of students graduating from upper secondary education and, hence, their possibility to find appropriate work after graduation; expanding the offer of distance learning is another important measure, especially relevant for those living in rural and remote areas.

Specific targeted measures for groups at risk are focused on students with special educational needs.

3. Recent ELVET-specific measures

No ELVET specific measures have been identified but some general ELET measures have a strong VET dimension (see the 'Education Can Work' project, for example).

Cross-sector cooperation

Cooperation mechanisms on early leaving are being developed. They involve the policy areas of employment and social affairs. Moreover, the Prime Minister's Office formed a task force to outlay an action plan for a better integration of the labour market and the education system ⁽¹²⁷⁾. The group consists of governmental officials, representatives from labour unions, universities, secondary school and youth organisations.

Multi-agency partnerships at local/institutional level involve professionals such as school heads, guidance specialists, psychologists and social workers but partnership practice is not yet well established.

Education and career guidance

Education and career guidance is explicitly considered as a prevention, intervention and compensation measure to tackle early leaving.

In the basic curriculum (primary and lower secondary education), education and career guidance is both integrated into one or several subjects and a cross-curricular topic. Besides, schools have an obligation to provide access to specific guidance services in lower and upper secondary education.

School staff dealing with education and career guidance are teachers without specific training as well as education and career counsellors.

[labour-market/Labour-market](#)

⁽¹²⁶⁾ <http://www.hagstofa.is/Pages/95?NewsID=5981>

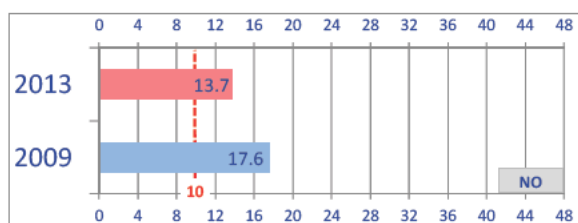
⁽¹²⁷⁾ See: Prime Minister's Office (2012). *Allir stundi nám og vinnu við sitt hæfi. Tillögur um samþættingu menntunar og atvinnu*. Available in Icelandic at http://www.forsaetisraduneyti.is/media/Skyrslur/Mennta_hopur-tilloguskjal-121112.pdf.

Students also receive guidance from school counsellors and guest speakers and participate in field trips to work places.

The main compensation measure consists of re-integrating early leavers in the mainstream education. Guidance and a tailor-made curriculum are the main elements of this procedure. Guidance enables to identify student's interests and skills and offers theoretical study and practical choices such as participation in industry.

Norway

ELET rate and national target



Source: Eurostat (LFS).

Norway, as a non-EU Member State, was not requested to set a national quantitative target for reducing the rate of early leavers. However, the Ministry for Education mentions in the 'New Possibilities' project (*Ny GIV*)⁽¹²⁸⁾ the objective to raise the rate of young people completing upper secondary education and training, after five years of starting upper secondary level 1, from 69 % to 75 % by 2015.

Definition(s)

The national definition used is: leaving school without reaching an upper secondary school leaving certificate (measured five years after the start of upper secondary level 1).

National data collection

Statistics Norway is in charge of the statistical data collection for the Eurostat Labour Force Survey.

⁽¹²⁸⁾ <http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/kd/kampanier/ny-giv.html?id=632025>

The Directorate for Education and Training manages the school portal, which provides data on primary and secondary education. This data collection is provided by schools via a student register, and the county authorities create data files which are transmitted to Statistics Norway. The data are collected twice a year for general education and monthly for vocational education and training. They are aggregated at top, regional, local and school levels. Indicators are published by the Directorate for Education and Training on the School Portal⁽¹²⁹⁾ every year.

In order to follow up progress related to the objective of 75 % of students completing an upper secondary qualification in 2015, the so called 'completion barometer' (*Gjennomføringsbarometer*) was created. One of the objectives was to define a common set of indicators across counties and harmonise definitions and data processing. The completion barometer⁽¹³⁰⁾, published by the Directorate of Education and Training twice a year, is more comprehensive than data available on the School Portal.

Strategy, policies and measures

1. Comprehensive strategy

Norway's 'New Possibilities' project, that started in 2010 and in which the Directorate for Education and Training is involved, encompasses three different sub-projects:

- the Project on Improved Statistics: a common set of indicators has been developed so that successful completion and early leavers are registered in the same way in every county and municipality;
- the Transition Project, that aims at developing a follow-up system for students with poorer results, building collaboration tools between county authorities (responsible for upper secondary education) and municipalities (responsible for lower

⁽¹²⁹⁾ <https://skoleporten.udir.no/>

⁽¹³⁰⁾ <http://www.udir.no/Tilstand/Analyser-og-statistikk/vgo/Gjennomforing/Gjennomforingsbarometre/>

secondary education and below), and offering intensive trainings to these students (including summer ones). The secondary curriculum has also been reformed, making it more relevant for vocational education and training and more practical;

- the Follow-up Project targets young people between 16 and 21 years of age, neither in school nor at work. It aims at motivating them to get back to school or work. Inter-agency and professional collaboration between the local authorities and the employment sector are set up.

2. Recent policies and measures

All the main policies and measures related to early leaving are included in the initiative mentioned above.

Specific targeted measures for groups at risk are focused on the 10 % lowest achieving students in the last year of lower secondary education.

3. Recent ELVET-specific measures

- A special apprenticeship subsidy scheme – operating alongside the mainstream one – is available to encourage companies to take on as apprentices young people with special needs and others identified as being at high risk of dropping out.
- The Education Act states that VET learners with missing qualifications can enter apprenticeship and pass missing subjects later.

Cross-sector cooperation

The policy areas of employment, youth and health are involved in cooperating on early leaving. Cooperation mechanisms are being tested within 'New Possibilities' project.

'New Possibilities' aims at establishing vertical cooperation and a lasting collaboration between the central government, the regional county authorities and the local municipalities in order to get more young people to complete and pass upper secondary education and training.

Coordination is ensured by the Ministry of Education.

Multi-agency partnerships at local/institutional level involve professionals such as school heads, guidance specialists, psychologists, social workers and youth workers, but partnership practice is not yet well established.

Education and career guidance

Education and career guidance is not explicitly considered as a prevention and intervention measure to tackle early leaving but it is explicitly considered as a compensation measure for this purpose.

Education and career guidance is taught as a compulsory separate subject ⁽¹³¹⁾ and a cross-curricular topic in secondary education. In lower secondary education, school counselling services are also provided.

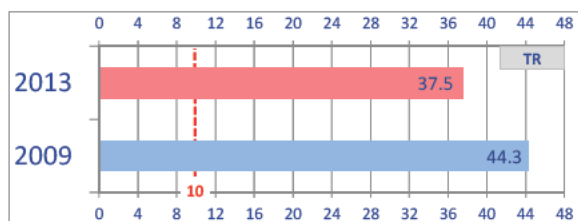
School staff dealing with education and career guidance are teachers with and without specific training, education and career counsellors, and social workers/pedagogues.

Education and career guidance as a compensation measure takes the form of follow-up services organised locally for young people aged 16 to 21 who have rights to attend upper secondary education but are not in education, training or work. These services also deal with detecting and monitoring the target groups.

⁽¹³¹⁾ 'Educational choice' in lower secondary education and 'In-depth study project' in upper secondary education.

Turkey

ELET rate and national target



Source: Eurostat (LFS).

Turkey, as a non-EU Member State, was not requested to set a national quantitative target for reducing the rate of early leavers.

Definition(s)

In Turkey, early leaving is not officially defined but the concept of 'absenteeism' is used.

National data collection

The Turkish Statistical Institute is in charge of the statistical data collection for the Eurostat Labour Force Survey.

Absenteeism is registered via the Ministry of Education's e-school system. This data collection is aggregated once a year at top, regional and school levels but is not publicly available. However, parents can monitor their children's progress through the e-school system.

Strategy, policies and measures

1. Comprehensive strategy

Turkey does not have a comprehensive strategy to tackle early leaving.

2. Recent policies and measures

The Ministry of Education initiated the 'Project of Increasing Attendance at Primary Schools' (*İlköğretim Kurumlarına Devam Oranlarının Artırılması Projesi*), which aims at fighting absenteeism in the first 8 years of compulsory education. The two-year project started on

October 2013 with financial support from EU funds ⁽¹³²⁾.

Specific targeted measures for groups at risk exist. They are focused on students with socially disadvantaged background and students with special educational needs.

3. Recent ELVET-specific measures

No ELVET specific measures have been identified.

Cross-sector cooperation

Cooperation mechanisms are being tested within projects. For instance, the Ministry for Family and Social Policies cooperate in the Conditional Cash Transfer Programme (*Şartlı Nakit Transferi – ŞNT*), under the Social Risk Mitigating Project (*Sosyal Riski Azaltma Projesi*), funded by the World Bank. ŞNT aims, among others, at encouraging students from deprived families, to pursue their primary and secondary education programmes thanks to a specific financial support.

Concerning multi-agency partnerships at local/institutional level, professionals are involved (head teachers and teachers), but partnership practice is not yet well established.

Education and career guidance

Education and career guidance is not explicitly considered as a prevention, intervention and compensation measure to tackle early leaving.

It is embedded in the secondary curriculum as a compulsory separate subject: 'Counselling and Career Planning' in lower secondary education; 'Counselling and Guiding' in upper secondary education. In addition, school counselling services are also available in secondary education.

Teachers specifically trained for education and career guidance should be in charge of this

⁽¹³²⁾ <http://tegm.meb.gov.tr/www/ilkogretim-kurumlarina-devam-oranlarinin-artirilmasi-projesi/icerik/141>

subject. However, there is a lack of qualified teachers in this field.

Counselling may also be provided by professional counsellors in Counselling and Psychological Research Guidance Centres (*Rehberlik ve Arařtırma Merkezleri*).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Tackling Early Leaving from Education and Training in Europe: Strategies, Policies and Measures

This joint Eurydice/Cedefop report sheds light on early leaving from education and training – a serious challenge in many EU countries. It aims to add value to Member States' and the European Commission's endeavours in this area by monitoring developments in the design and implementation of strategies, policies and measures to combat early leaving and support student learning. The key areas addressed in this report are data collection and monitoring, strategies and policies against early leaving focusing on prevention, intervention and compensation and on groups at increased risk of early leaving, the role of education and career guidance, governance and cross-sector cooperation, and early leaving from the perspective of vocational education and training.

The Eurydice Network's task is to understand and explain how Europe's different education systems are organised and how they work. The network provides descriptions of national education systems, comparative studies devoted to specific topics, indicators and statistics. All Eurydice publications are available free of charge on the Eurydice website or in print upon request. Through its work, Eurydice aims to promote understanding, cooperation, trust and mobility at European and international levels. The network consists of national units located in European countries and is co-ordinated by the EU Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency. For more information about Eurydice, see <http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice>.

