

CHAPTER 2.

Research scope and methodology

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

The main research questions were:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁽¹²⁾ If you are interested, please contact the project manager, Irene Psifidou, at: rena.psifidou@cedefop.europa.eu