

CHAPTER 3.

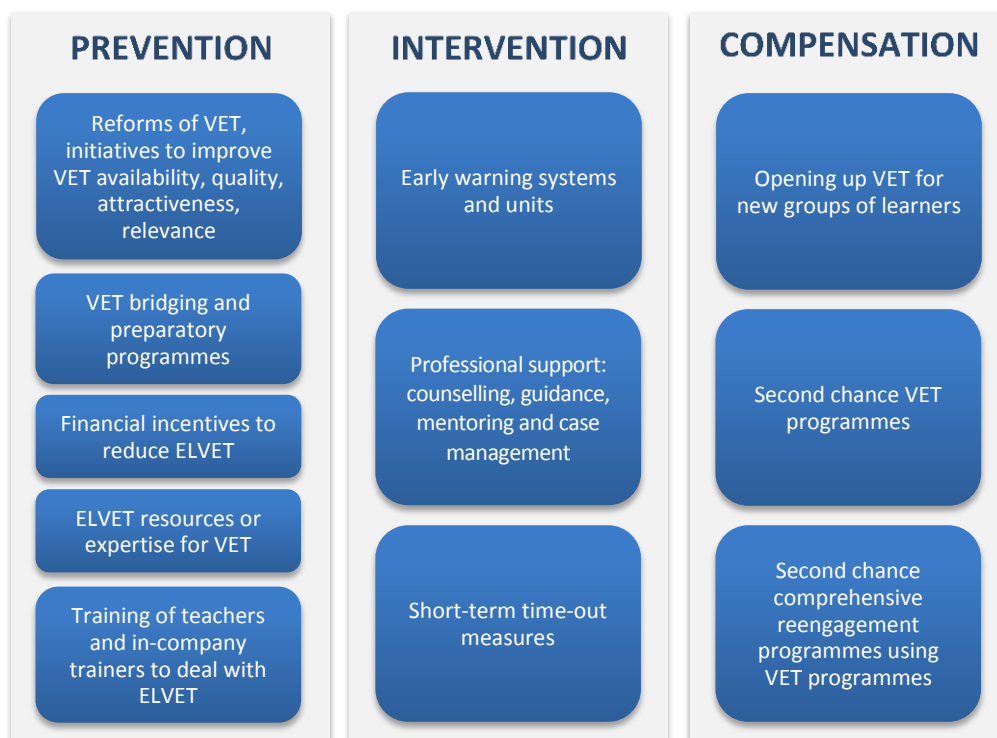
VET policies to address early leaving

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

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

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

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



Source: Cedefop.

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

3.1. Preventive measures

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

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

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

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

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

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

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

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

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

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

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

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

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

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

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

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

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

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

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

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

Financial incentives are used as a way of encouraging:

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

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

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

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

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

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

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

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

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

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

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

Table 9. ELVET resources or expertise for VET schools

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

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

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

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

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

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

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

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

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

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

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

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

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

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

3.2. Intervention measures

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

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

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

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

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

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

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

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

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

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

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

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

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

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

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

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

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

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

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

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

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

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

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

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

3.3. Compensatory measures

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

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

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

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

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

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

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

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

Table 17. **Second chance VET programmes**

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

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

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

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

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

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

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

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

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

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

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

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.

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

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

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

Source: Cedefop desk research and interviews.