



CEDEFOP

European Centre for the Development
of Vocational Training

EN

Leaving education early:

putting vocational education
and training in centre stage



IRELAND

Introduction

This is one of the 15 country fiches that have been developed as background material to the Cedefop study:

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

[Volume I: investigating causes and extent](#)

[Volume II: evaluating policy impact](#)

The publication was produced by Cedefop, Department for learning and employability, under the supervision of Antonio Ranieri.

Irene Psifidou, Cedefop expert, was responsible for the publication and research conducted under the 'Early leaving from education and training' project from October 2013 to July 2016.

Country fiches have been developed and drafted on the basis of desk research and interviews conducted between 2014-15 by ICF consulting services with national stakeholders, social partners, companies, VET providers and practitioners as well as learners who provided country-specific information. They have been validated by selected interviewees ⁽¹⁾.

Country fiches are available for: Austria, Belgium-Fr, Germany, Denmark, Estonia, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal and United Kingdom.

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Please note that this is an unedited version.

⁽¹⁾ The detailed methodology as well as an anonymous list of all interviewees, including information on country, organisation and job position/role, is available on request. Please contact Cedefop expert in charge Irene Psifidou: rena.psifidou@cedefop.europa.eu

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1. Definitions applying in national and regional context

Questions	Answers
What is the national definition(s) of early leavers from education and training?	The term 'early school leavers' is used in official statistics and corresponds to the international definition used in the labour force survey.
Who are classified as early leavers from education and training?	<p>The Irish Central Statistics Office (CSO) defines 'early school leavers' as the share of 18-24 year olds in the population who have attained at most ISCED level 2 and who have not been in receipt of education and training in the preceding four weeks ⁽²⁾.</p> <p>In addition to the above, 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 ⁽³⁾.</p> <p>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 five Ds ⁽⁴⁾ in their junior certificate ⁽⁵⁾; the second priority group are learners who have less than five Ds in their leaving certificate ⁽⁶⁾⁽⁷⁾.</p>

⁽²⁾ This definition reflects that used CSO (2011). Quarterly national household survey educational attainment thematic report 2011. In: Condon, N. (2014). *Early leaving from vocational education and training: Ireland*. For Cedefop, Solas, 2014.

⁽³⁾ 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.
<http://bookshop.europa.eu/en/tackling-early-leaving-from-education-and-training-in-europe-pbEC0414859/?CatalogCategoryID=QN4KABste0YAAAEjFZEY4e5L>
 [accessed 2.5.2017].

⁽⁴⁾ Results of the Junior Certificate examination subjects are given in the form of grades. Each grade represents a percentage range of marks. A 'D' grade is equivalent to 40-54%. For more information see the Irish State Examinations web site. Internet: <https://www.examinations.ie/index.php?l=en&mc=ca&sc=sc>

⁽⁵⁾ The *junior certificate* examination is held at the end of the *junior cycle* in post-primary schools (refers to lower second level education). The junior cycle caters for students in the 13 to 15 year old age group. Students normally sit for the examinations at the age of 14 or 15, after three years of post-primary education. However, candidature for the examination is not limited to post-primary school students. For more information <https://www.examinations.ie/index.php?l=en&mc=ca&sc=sc> [accessed 2.5.2017].

⁽⁶⁾ The examination is the final examination of post-primary education. It is held at the end of the senior cycle in post-primary schools (upper second level education). The senior cycle caters for students in the 15 to 18 year old age group. The majority of candidates who sit for the examinations are recognised students in post-primary schools, are 17 or 18 years of age and have completed 5 or 6 years of post-primary education. However, candidature for the examination is not limited to post-primary school students. For more information see <https://www.examinations.ie/index.php?l=en&mc=ca&sc=sb> [accessed 2.5.2017]. Results of the leaving certificate examination subjects are given in the form of grades. Each grade represents a percentage range of marks including 'D' grades as

Questions	Answers
	The remaining terms including 'drop-outs' refer to students who do not complete their programme of study regardless of age or whether they continue within the education and training system ⁽⁸⁾ .
What is the national definition of early leaving from VET? Does it include those in apprenticeships?	There is no separate specific definition for early leaving from VET.
What are the data used to inform this definition and who is responsible for it? (i.e. which data set(s) provide information that is used to compute ELET indicators and who sponsors the collection and collects these data).	The quarterly national household survey (QNHS) conducted by the Central Statistics Office collects information on the educational attainment of the population, which is supplied to Eurostat and used for the compilation of European comparative statistics on early school leavers. Early school leavers are defined as persons aged 18 to 24 whose highest level of education or training is the Junior Certificate or equivalent, and who have not received any education or training in the four weeks preceding the survey. The information collected relates to all education or training received including initial education, further education, continuing or further training, training within a company, apprenticeship, on-the-job training, seminars, distance learning, evening classes, self-learning etc. ⁽⁹⁾ .

2. Rates of early leaving from VET during last five years

2.1. Statistics on early leaving

2.1.1. The drop-out rate from general education

Ireland's Early School Leaving rate is below the European average. Approximately 60 000 young people leave second-level education each year at present. ⁽¹⁰⁾ Of

follows; D1=50-54%; D2=45-49%; D3=40-44.

<https://www.examinations.ie/index.php?l=en&mc=ca&sc=sb> [accessed 2.5.2017].

⁽⁷⁾ Excerpted from 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. http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/175EN.pdf [accessed 2.5.2017].

⁽⁸⁾ Condon, N. (2014). *Early leaving from vocational education and training: Ireland*. For Cedefop, Solas, 2014.

⁽⁹⁾ *Retention rates of pupils in second level schools 2008 entry cohort*, February 2015. <http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Statistical-Reports/Retention-Rates-of-Pupils-in-Second-Level-Schools-2008-Cohort.pdf> [accessed 2.5.2017].

⁽¹⁰⁾ *Pathways to work: the implementation of the European Council's recommendation for a youth guarantee – Ireland*. Department of Social Protection.

these, around 8 000 leave before completing upper secondary education (this figure includes young people leaving to attend non-state aided secondary education and those who emigrate with their families). A significant proportion of this 8 000 enters second-chance education. The following information is produced by the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit analysing CSO quarterly national household survey data.

Early school leavers as a % of 18-24 year olds by gender, quarter 4 2009-quarter 4 2013

Early school leavers	Q4 2009	Q4 2010	Q4 2011	Q4 2012	Q4 2013
Male	16.0	12.9	12.5	10.1	9.5
Female	9.0	9.6	9.0	7.3	7.3
Total	12.6	11.3	10.7	8.7	8.4

Source: SLMRU (SOLAS) Analysis of CSO (QNHS) data

The Department of Education and Skills compiles statistics on annual retention rates for lower and upper secondary education (ISCED 2 and 3) and concern students in the state-aided school system only ⁽¹¹⁾. Pupils leaving school to undertake courses outside the traditional secondary schooling system are not included and therefore are treated as early school leavers for these purposes ⁽¹²⁾. The DES note that the real retention rate in upper second level education may be higher, therefore, if participation in apprenticeship, out-of-school programmes and other training within the first year of leaving school was taken into account. ⁽¹³⁾

The retention rates are presented below for the 2005 to 2008 entry cohorts. ⁽¹⁴⁾ The 2008 entry cohort, for example, amounted to 56 075 students. Of this entry cohort, 96.89% sat the Junior Certificate Exams (ISCED Level 2) in 2011 or 2012 and 90.56% sat the Leaving Certificate Exams (ISCED Level 3) in

<http://www.welfare.ie/en/downloads/youth-guarantee-implementation-plan.pdf>
[accessed 2.5.2017].

⁽¹¹⁾ *Retention rates of pupils in second level schools (2008) entry cohort*, February 2015. <http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Statistical-Reports/Retention-Rates-of-Pupils-in-Second-Level-Schools-2008-Cohort.pdf> [accessed 2.5.2017].

⁽¹²⁾ Ibid.

⁽¹³⁾ Ibid.

⁽¹⁴⁾ The statistics from 2005 only are presented here as there was a break in series from 2005 onwards due to revised methodology. Retention rates of pupils in second Level schools (2008). *Entry cohort*. February 2015. <http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Statistical-Reports/Retention-Rates-of-Pupils-in-Second-Level-Schools-2008-Cohort.pdf> [accessed 2.5.2017].

2013 or 2014 ⁽¹⁵⁾. The figures also show the year on year loss of students from the system prior to sitting the exams as shown in the table below. At both exam stages in the system, more females than males completed the exams.

Absolute numbers of students leaving the system prior to the relevant exam, 2005-08)

Cohort entry year	Numbers entering lower secondary level	Original cohort who did not sit lower secondary exam	Original cohort who completed lower secondary but did not start upper secondary/dropped out during/did not sit final exam	Original cohort who did not sit upper secondary exam
2005	55 253	2 006	3 398	5 404
2006	54 917	2 257	3 515	5 772
2007	55 223	1 695	3 756	5 451
2008	56 075	1 744	3 549	5 293

Source: Own calculations based on figures presented in DES report *Retention rates of pupils in second level schools 2008 entry cohort*, February 2015.

Junior certificate (ISCED level 2) retention rates (% of original cohort who sat junior Cert exam), 2005-08

Cohort entry year	Male	Female	Total	Original cohort who did not sit lower secondary exam
2005 ⁽¹⁶⁾	96.10	96.66	96.37	2 271
2006 ⁽¹⁷⁾	95.45	96.35	95.89	1 993
2007 ⁽¹⁸⁾	96.58	97.30	96.93	1 695
2008	96.68	97.12	96.89	1 722

Source: Own calculations based on figures presented in DES report *Retention rates of pupils in second level schools 2008 entry cohort*, February 2015.

Leaving certificate (ISCED level 3) retention rates (% of original cohort who sat leaving Cert exam), 2005-08

Cohort entry year	Male	Female	Total	Original cohort who did not sit upper secondary exam
2005	88.68 %	91.82 %	90.22 %	3 398
2006	87.64 %	91.42 %	89.49 %	3 515

⁽¹⁵⁾ According to the report on retention rates, students may have taken exams in one of two years depending on whether they repeated a year in lower secondary cycle, or repeated a year or took part in transition year (thus adding a year to the usual two-year upper secondary cycle). Ibid.

⁽¹⁶⁾ <http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Retention-Rates-of-Pupils-in-Second-Level-Schools-2005-and-2006-Entry-Cohorts.pdf> [accessed 2.5.2017].

⁽¹⁷⁾ <http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Retention-Rates-of-Pupils-in-Second-Level-Schools-2005-and-2006-Entry-Cohorts.pdf> [accessed 2.5.2017].

⁽¹⁸⁾ http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Statistical-Reports/stats_retention_report_2007_cohort.pdf [accessed 2.5.2017].

Cohort entry year	Male	Female	Total	Original cohort who did not sit upper secondary exam
2007	88.36 %	91.94 %	90.12 %	3 756
2008	89.26 %	91.93 %	90.56 %	3 549

Source: Own calculations based on figures presented in DES report *Retention rates of pupils in second level schools 2008 entry cohort*, February 2015.

2.2. Drop-out rate from school-based VET – or even from a specific type of programme

2.2.1. Leaving certificate applied (LCA) – upper secondary education qualification

The students who completed the leaving certificate applied are included in the retention figures above (see table above). From interviews undertaken, it was learned that while attempts were made to separate out this cohort in the retention rate analysis it was too difficult to calculate programme based retention statistics e.g. LCA.

Another report produced by the statistics section in the DES on the transfer routes of early school leavers ⁽¹⁹⁾ looks at the destinations of year one students in the three upper secondary level education programmes (including LCA) as a whole only.

2.2.2. Youthreach – second change option with an education focus

There does not appear to be any information on dropout rates from the Youthreach programme. From the interviews conducted, it was learned that dropout rates from the programme used to be a lot higher before the recession when the employment opportunities were greater but this lessened during the crisis when opportunities dwindled and a greater proportion of participants stayed on to complete their courses.

⁽¹⁹⁾ DES (2013). *Early leavers: What next?* www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Early-Leavers-What-Next-.pdf [accessed 2.5.2017].

2.3. Drop out rate from FÁS ⁽²⁰⁾ VET programmes

2.3.1. Community training programme – second chance option with a training focus

Approximately every two years, FÁS commissions a follow up survey of trainees who had participated on VET programmes 12 months earlier to learn about the impact of FÁS training and employment programmes on their subsequent labour market situation ⁽²¹⁾. The most recent survey was carried out in the summer of 2013 and focused on training for the unemployed only ⁽²²⁾.

In the survey, the community training centres are grouped together with two other programmes (notably the bridging/foundation training programme and the local training initiatives) ⁽²³⁾. The survey data found that four out of five (81 %)

⁽²⁰⁾ FÁS is the Irish National Education and Training Authority. It has been dissolved under recent government reforms of the sector and replaced by SOLAS, the new statutory authority (the Further Education and Training Authority) to oversee the further education and training sector. Education and training boards (ETBs) have taken over responsibility for the management of training delivery. SOLAS is responsible for the coordination and funding of training and further education programmes around the country, while ETBs are responsible for the delivery of publicly-funded further education and training (FET) programmes. <http://www.fas.ie/en/contact-us/> and <http://www.etbi.ie/public-sector-reform/solas/> [accessed 2.5.2017].

⁽²¹⁾ Condon (2014), op cit.

⁽²²⁾ The follow up survey does not include apprentices as apprentices in Ireland are considered to be employed. The apprenticeship system which consists of only 26 trades, typically takes four years to complete. It is the subject of a separate follow up survey which is conducted periodically. The last such survey was carried out in 2007 and found that 26% of apprentices did not complete their apprenticeship. An updated survey is just about to be published (2015) on the apprenticeship system in Ireland. Source: SOLAS.

⁽²³⁾ The following information on these courses is extracted from the most recent FÁS (2013) follow-up survey of former FÁS trainees (referenced above); the bridging/foundation training programme, the community training centres and the local training initiatives are designed to provide unemployed persons with the generic and technical skills to enhance their employability. The report states that a high proportion of the trainees on these programmes are considerably disadvantaged; positive outcomes include allowing trainees to enrol on higher level education or training course. By contrast, programmes like the specific skills training (SST) programmes and the traineeship programme are designed to equip participants with technical skills which are more in demand in the domestic labour market and therefore are expected to generate higher employment rates than the former programmes targeted at disadvantaged groups. Progression to an appropriate higher education or training course would nevertheless be considered a positive outcome. The Bridging/Foundation training courses, the local training initiative and community training centres are according to the Unesco Institute of Statistics at ISCED Level 2.

trainees reported that they completed their courses. The findings also indicated that those who secured employment were more like to have completed their course as were participants who entered the course as long term unemployed. Another finding indicated that compared to participants in other subgroups, participants with at most a lower secondary qualification (junior certificate) were less likely to have completed the course. The most cited reason for not completing was personal issues while other reasons included courses perceived to be unsuitable by participants, and others securing employment while on the course.

A total of 88 % of trainees that completed their course received a certificate, with only a small number still awaiting a certificate.

Completion rates, certification and usefulness of certificate ⁽²⁴⁾

	Completed course	Received Certificate	Certificate useful when applying for jobs?
Yes	81 %	88 %	70 %
No	19 %	12 %	30 %
Total	100 %	100 %	100 %

3. National and regional strategy to tackle ELET

There is no explicit, comprehensive policy framework on ESL in Ireland that brings together key stakeholders and programmes under one overarching policy. The issue is dealt with within a broader policy framework which includes the following.

Scope	Description
National and/or regional strategy/action plan to reduce ELET	National reform programme (NRP), 2015 ⁽²⁵⁾ . From the European perspective, Ireland's national reform programme sets out work underway across a range of policies towards sustainable economic recovery and growth. It identifies what has been done to implement the country-specific

<http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/ISCEDMappings/Pages/default.aspx> [accessed 2.5.2017].

⁽²⁴⁾ These results include the following programmes: the bridging/foundation training programme, the community training centres and the local training Initiatives. FÁS 2013 follow-up survey (op cit.).

⁽²⁵⁾ The majority of this section is exerted from the national reform programme 2015. FET strategy 2014-19 published by SOLAS.
<https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Further-Education-and-Training-Strategy-2014-2019.pdf> [accessed 2.5.2017].

Scope	Description
	<p>recommendations (CSRs) made to Ireland in 2014, and it also charts progress towards Europe 2020 targets. ⁽²⁶⁾</p> <p>Target 4 of the NRP concerns education – ‘to reduce the percentage of 18-24 year olds with at most lower secondary education and not in further education and training to 8 %...’ ⁽²⁷⁾. Improvement of education levels and retention levels in all cycles of education are central aims of the NRP for Ireland. It outlines a number of measures put in place to support the achievement of a national target to reduce the percentage of early school leavers to 8 % by 2020. It had fallen to 8.4 % by 2013. The measures include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) implementation of the national action plan: delivering equality of opportunity in schools (DEIS) providing a range of additional supports for the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities to assist them in working to improve attendance, retention and educational outcomes. The average leaving certificate retention rate in DEIS schools increased from 68.2 % for the 2001 entry cohort to 82.1 % for the 2008 cohort; (b) the integration of educational welfare services. Undertaken by Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. Delivery involving the educational welfare service, the home school community liaison scheme, the school completion programme and schools themselves aimed at improving service delivery to schools, children and their family; (c) the literacy and numeracy strategy was launched in 2011 covering early childhood primary and secondary education. Children who do not learn to read, write and communicate effectively are more likely to leave school early and therefore the strategy is an important measure assisting achievement of national early school leaving target. Annual budget to increase by EUR 6 million to almost EUR 14 million in 2015 ⁽²⁸⁾; (d) reform of the junior cycle of secondary education contributing to tackle the problem of early school leaving with immediate focus on the roll-out of continuing professional development for teachers.

⁽²⁶⁾ FET strategy 2014-19 published by SOLAS.

<https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Further-Education-and-Training-Strategy-2014-2019.pdf> [accessed 2.5.2017].

⁽²⁷⁾ The 2014 further education and training services plan published by SOLAS.

<https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Further-Education-and-Training-Strategy-2014-2019.pdf> [accessed 2.5.2017].

⁽²⁸⁾ Department of Education and Skills (2015). *Literacy and numeracy for learning and life. The national strategy to improve literacy and numeracy among children and young people 2011-20 summary update on the implementation on actions in the strategy for 2014*. January 2015. Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit, 2015. <http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Literacy-and-Numeracy/Literacy-and-Numeracy-Summary-Update-January-2015-.pdf> [accessed 2.5.2017].

Scope	Description
Elements of the strategy are explicitly linked to VET	No. However, the DEIS strategy includes in its action plan to tackle educational disadvantage, alternative curriculum programmes, including the leaving certificate applied (LCA) which is an alternative route at upper secondary level education which has a strong vocational element to gain a qualification at ISCED level 3 ⁽²⁹⁾ .

Scope	Description ⁽³⁰⁾
National and/or regional strategy/action plan to reduce ELET	<p>The national action plan for educational inclusion – 'Delivering equality of opportunity in schools' (DEIS) – is a comprehensive early school leaving strategy and was launched by the Minister for Education and Science in May 2005 ⁽³¹⁾. It is the department's main policy initiative to address educational disadvantage.</p> <p>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. 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.</p> <p>There are currently 852 schools (658 primary and 194 post primary) participating in the DEIS school support programme. All of these schools are eligible for a range of additional supports to help them to improve attendance, retention and educational outcomes for their students ⁽³²⁾. 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.</p> <p>The action plan contains the following measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) enhanced allocation of teachers; (b) providing a free year of early childhood education and care for children of pre-school age; (c) continuing professional development of teachers; (d) administrative principals on lower enrolment and staffing figures; (e) a new model for allocating additional financial support that takes into account the level of disadvantage and the size of the school; (f) literacy and numeracy programmes;

⁽²⁹⁾ European Commission; EACEA; Eurydice; Cedefop, (2014). Op cit.

⁽³⁰⁾ Information for this section is taken verbatim from Cedefop; Eurydice (2015). op. cit.

⁽³¹⁾ For a copy of the plan, see https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/deis_action_plan_on_educational_inclusion.pdf [accessed 2.5.2017].

⁽³²⁾ http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/docs/2014/monitor2014-ie_en.pdf [accessed 2.5.2017].

Scope	Description ⁽³⁰⁾
	<p>(g) the School Meals Programme, operated by the Department of social protection, which provides schools with funding for meals for disadvantaged children;</p> <p>(h) 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;</p> <p>(i) innovation in school planning encompassing targeted improvement plans for attendance, retention in school, and educational</p> <p>(j) progression; literacy, numeracy, and educational attainment; and partnership with parents, support agencies and other educational providers;</p> <p>(k) 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.</p> <p>A specific budget expenditure of EUR 742.8 million was provided for educational disadvantage in 2013 (including school meals programme expenditure).</p>
Elements of the strategy that are explicitly linked to VET	<p>In the measures outlined in the action plan, alternative curriculum programmes at second level education are outlined including the leaving certificate applied programme (LCA) (ISCED 3), which aims at preparing students for adult and working life in two years at upper secondary level and has a strong vocational element.</p>

Scope	Description ⁽³³⁾
National and/or regional strategy/action plan to reduce ELET	<p>Further education and training strategy, 2014-19 ⁽³⁴⁾.</p> <p>The FET strategy aims to deliver a higher quality learning experience leading to better outcomes for all those who engage in FET. It outlines a roadmap and implementation plan to realise the vision of a world-class integrated system of further education and training in Ireland which will support economic development, increase social inclusion and meet the needs of all learners, communities and employers who engage with FET. The strategy also reflects the priorities articulated in the Action Plan for Jobs, Pathways to Work and wider policy reform in education.</p> <p>One of the areas that FET ⁽³⁵⁾ will provide for is: education training, skills development and related supports for young people such as Youthreach ⁽³⁶⁾, community training centre provision ⁽³⁷⁾, enabling unemployed early school leavers, those not in employment education or training (NEETs) to access/re-entry/completion of mainstream lower and/or upper second level education to meet individual, personal, career and employment aspirations (p. 52).</p>
Elements of the strategy are explicitly linked to VET	Further education and training in the Irish context also encompasses many forms of skill formation systems normally regarded as vocational education and training (VET) in many European countries.

4. Recent policy initiatives

Scope and questions	
<p>New policy initiatives being undertaken that include a role for VET to reduce ELET: either</p> <p>(a) reduce ELET from VET</p> <p>(b) reduce ELET (in general) through VET</p>	<p>The Youth Guarantee for Ireland ⁽³⁸⁾, due to be implemented in full by the end of 2015, is formulated in two parts one of which caters for young people under the age of 18 and the other for young people aged 18-24. It is an initiative which has the potential to reduce ELET in general through VET.</p> <p>Young people under the age of 18 years who have left the school system without completing secondary education and who have failed to find employment will be provided with a quality 'second change' education/training pathway outside the school system such as Youthreach or be supported in re-entering the school system.</p>

⁽³³⁾ The information contained here is extracted directly from the FET strategy document.

⁽³⁴⁾ Published by SOLAS, the Further Education and Training Authority.

⁽³⁵⁾ FET provision formerly provided by the vocational education committees (VECs) now provided by the educational and training boards (ETBs) (FET strategy doc).

⁽³⁶⁾ Youthreach offers a flexible programme of integrated general education, vocational training and work experience.

⁽³⁷⁾ FET provision formerly provided by FÁS now provided by the ETBs.

⁽³⁸⁾ Taken from Pathways to Work: Implementation of the EU Council Recommendation on the Youth Guarantee for Ireland.

	Young people aged 18-24 years who become unemployed (whether on loss of a job or while seeking a first employment) and register with the benefits/employment service, and who subsequently remain unemployed for four months, will be provided with assistance to secure work or alternatively with a quality offer of training, education or work experience.
Is the role of VET in reducing ELET assuming greater or lesser importance? Why?	There is no VET schooling system in Ireland at secondary school level. Therefore, concerning the issue of ELET and VET, the policy focus in Ireland has been to contribute to a reduction in early school leaving through VET or VET type approaches. In the context of this success and in the context of the recent Irish government reforms of the further education and training sector and European initiatives like the Youth Guarantee to tackle youth unemployment, VET and VET type approaches to address ELET in Ireland look set to remain, improve and ultimately grow in importance.

5. Stakeholder cooperation

Questions	Role or involvement of stakeholders
<p>What are and have been the main influences of stakeholders in the development and implementation of VET related policies specifically to reduce ELET:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) employers (b) trade unions social partners (c) VET institutions (d) other learning providers (please specify) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Department of Education and Skills (DES): responsible for the national action plan for education inclusion (DEIS) to reduce educational disadvantage and ESL. Youthreach which offers second chance education to ESLs is a DES initiative. Responsible for collection of data which can be used to track the destinations of early school leavers. Is responsible for the leaving certificate applied programme. (b) Department of Social Protection (DSP): responsible for the roll out and implementation of the Youth Guarantee programme in Ireland. DSP acts as a broker between unemployed clients and SOLAS and has a significant input into planning of programmes coordinated by SOLAS. (c) Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA): is responsible for the home school liaison scheme and the schools. Completion programme as part of the measures in the DEIS to address educational disadvantage. (d) Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER). (e) SOLAS, the Further Education and Training Authority responsible for funding, planning and co-ordinating training and further education programmes for delivery through regional education and training boards (ETBs). Responsible for developing the FET strategy 2014-19 and monitoring its implementation. (f) Education and training boards: is responsible for the delivery of VET/FET programmes.

6. Monitoring systems

Question	Answers
What specific early leavers monitoring systems exist?	<p>(a) Description: in Ireland, the statistics unit in the Department of Education and Skills (DES) produce annual reports ⁽³⁹⁾ which track school leavers (excluding those in the final year of upper secondary) the year after they leave school. It focuses on pupils enrolled in post-primary schools in one academic year but not enrolled for the next academic year. It is based on an analysis of records held in the Department on students enrolled in DES aided post-primary schools (on the post-primary pupils database). Using a unique personal identifier (based on PPSN) pupils were traced to other data sources that were available at the time e.g. the P35 files (employer end-of-year returns) of the Revenue commissioner to establish estimates of the number of leavers who were in employment, the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) (now the Quality and Qualifications Ireland) awards database to establish how many leavers went on to further education and training, etc.</p> <p>(b) Aim: to track early school leavers.</p> <p>(c) Year introduced: the annual report began with the first report published in 2013 and focused on 2009/10 enrolments not enrolled in 2010/11.</p> <p>(d) Coverage: it covers students enrolled in DES aided post-primary schools (on the Post-Primary Pupils Database).</p>
What information is monitored/collected?	<p>(a) Numbers of drop outs: yes, classified by destination.</p> <p>(b) Reasons for dropping out: no.</p> <p>(c) Background characteristics of drop outs/those at risk (i.e. gender, age, language, migrant status etc.): Yes.</p> <p>(d) Information is presented on leaver's gender, nationality, type of post-primary educational institution (e.g. fee-paying, non-fee paying, etc.), year of study, geographical zone.</p>
What are the data used for? How it is used by VET institutions/providers?	<p>From the interviews carried out it is unclear if the information is being used yet or in what way it is being used by institutions or providers. As it is the first report in a series, it may be too soon yet to comment on if, when and how it's being used or its usefulness to VET institutions providers. There are obvious benefits to this type of data in the context of the current government reforms of the further education and training sector and the initiatives to combat youth unemployment in terms of targeting and support provision. In order to identify and target interventions at those who leave school early, as part of the Youth Guarantee concerning young people under 18 years of age, a system will be developed and implemented to ensure that all post primary schools give contact details for early school leavers to the</p>

⁽³⁹⁾ Department of Education and Skills (2013). *Early leavers: What next?* Report on early leavers from post-primary schools – pupils enrolled in 2009/10 and not in 2010/11. <http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Early-Leavers-What-Next-.pdf> [accessed 2.5.2017]. This is the first annual report.

	relevant Education and training board for early follow up on alternative education and training options ⁽⁴⁰⁾ .
What role is/has the monitoring system played in the design, development or implementation of the policies, strategies and initiatives?	It would appear that it has not yet played a role in the design, development or implementation of the policies, strategies and initiatives.

Question	Answers
What specific early leavers monitoring systems exist?	<p>(a) Description: data on non-attendance in primary and post-primary schools are collected by the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) through the annual attendance report (AAR) requirement on schools (Schools are obliged to collect data on non-attendance under Sections 21(6) of the Act of 2000).</p> <p>(b) Aim: monitoring non-attendance at primary and post-primary school.</p> <p>(c) Year introduced: data for the years 2003/04 through to 2010/11 are the focus of the earlier reports (Weir (2004), Ó Briain (2006), Mac Aogáin (2008), Millar (2010, 2011, 2012, 2013). The most recent report deals with data for the academic year 2011/12 and links to the data reported previously ⁽⁴¹⁾).</p> <p>(d) Coverage: all DES-aided primary and post-primary schools.</p>
What information is monitored/collected?	<p>(a) Numbers of drop outs: not applicable as the data concerns information on attendance.</p> <p>(b) Reasons for dropping out: n/a</p> <p>(c) Background characteristics of drop outs/those at risk (i.e. gender, age, language, migrant status etc.): n/a</p> <p>(d) Information is presented on non-attendance by school type, urban and rural school, province and country as well as a comparison between DEIS schools and all other schools.</p>

⁽⁴⁰⁾ Pathways to work: the implementation of the EU Council recommendations on the Youth Guarantee for Ireland.

⁽⁴¹⁾ With the establishment of the Agency on 1 January 2014, the former National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) was dissolved and its functions under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 transferred to the Agency. The obligation on schools under Sections 21(6) of the Act of 2000 (the annual attendance report) is not affected.

Millar, D (2012). *School attendance data from primary and post-primary Schools 2011/12 [under Section 21(6) of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000]*. Analysis and Report to the Child and Family Agency, by Educational Research Centre. http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/School_Attendance_Final_2011-12.pdf [accessed 2.5.2017].

What are the data used for? How it is used by VET institutions/providers? (<p>The Child and Family Agency collects data and publishes reports on non-attendance. The data is used to follow up on non-attendances, employing educational welfare officers at local level to provide support and advice to parents and schools.</p> <p>There is no links between the data and VET institutions/providers.</p>
How is the monitoring system linked with offering support measures? (i.e. is it being used to contact those who have dropped out to provide support to find employment, education or further training?)	<p>The Child and Family Agency's (CFA) ⁽⁴²⁾ is the national agency responsible to ensure that every child attends school regularly, or otherwise receives an appropriate minimum education. It advises government on school attendance and education provision and supports schools, families and children in relation to non-attendance ⁽⁴³⁾. It employs educational welfare officers at local level throughout the country to provide support and advice to parents and school and follow up on absences from school. They also help to co-ordinate all policies concerning attendance and educational welfare. The Agency's remit includes responsibility for the Home school community liaison scheme, the School completion programme and the educational welfare service (EWS). It publishes reports on non-attendance.</p>
What role is/has the monitoring system played in the design, development or implementation of the policies, strategies and initiatives?	<p>The implementation of strategies and initiatives to identify and support those at risk of early school leaving (e.g. school completion programme, home school community liaison scheme) relies on data and information collected on non-attendance at school.</p>

Question	Answers
What specific early leavers monitoring systems exist?	<p>Description: Approximately every two years, SOLAS commissions independent researchers to carry out a survey to learn about the impact of training and employment programmes on trainees' subsequent labour market situation. The most recent survey was carried out in the summer of 2013 and focused on training for the unemployed only (and did not include apprentices as apprentices in Ireland are considered to be employed).</p> <p>Aim: monitoring destinations of persons who had participated in programmes. The results are used by SOLAS to improve the relevance and quality of the services it provides, primarily to the</p>

⁽⁴²⁾ The following information is taken from http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary_and_post_primary_education/attendance_and_discipline_in_schools/school_attendance.html [accessed 2.5.2017].

⁽⁴³⁾ Rationale for monitoring attendance: poor school attendance requires a prompt response, otherwise it can lead to poorer exam results, early school leaving and poorer life chances for children (<http://www.tusla.ie/services/educational-welfare-services/information-for-schools-inc-absence-reporting/reporting-absenteeism/> [accessed 2.5.2017]).

Question	Answers
	<p>unemployed and disadvantaged, as well as to some already in employment but seeking to up-skill or re-skill. ⁽⁴⁴⁾</p> <p>Year introduced: pre-2000 (the earliest follow up survey that could be found was published in 1997).</p> <p>Coverage: The survey covers all full-time training programmes, as well as evening courses and online learning.</p>
What information is monitored/collected?	<p>Numbers of drop outs: Proportion of completions.</p> <p>Reasons for dropping out: yes.</p> <p>Background characteristics of drop outs/those at risk (i.e. gender, age, language, migrant status etc.): disadvantaged group (i.e. long term unemployment (LTU), ESL or single parent).</p> <p>Outcomes regarding full time training courses – course completion rate, unemployment impact, employment impact, job relevance of training, up skilling, shift to higher skilled employment, social relevance of training.</p>
What are the data used for? How it is used by VET institutions/providers?	<p>The results are used by SOLAS to improve the relevance and quality of the services it provides, primarily to the unemployed and disadvantaged, as well as to some already in employment but seeking to up-skill or re-skill ⁽⁴⁵⁾.</p>
How is the monitoring system linked with offering support measures? (i.e. is it being used to contact those who have dropped out to provide support to find employment, education or further training?)	<p>No, the data is not linked with offering support measures to people who may have dropped out.</p>
What role is/has the monitoring system played in the design, development or implementation of the policies, strategies and initiatives?	<p>The results are used by FÁS to improve the relevance and quality of the services it provides, primarily to the unemployed and disadvantaged, and to some already in employment but seeking to up-skill or re-skill. ⁽⁴⁶⁾</p>

⁽⁴⁴⁾ Ibid.

⁽⁴⁵⁾ Ibid.

⁽⁴⁶⁾ Ibid.

7. Effect of the economic crisis

Question	Answers
<p>In what ways has the role of VET in reducing ELET been influenced by the economic crisis: (please consider):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(a) supply of VET places;(b) demand for VET places;(c) qualifications of VET students (increasing decreasing);(d) popularity and perception of VET;(e) increase/decrease in public resources for VET;(f) access to 'second chance' VET opportunities.	<p>By 2013, the ESL rate in Ireland had dropped to 8.4%. Information from some of the interviews indicated that as a result of the lack of employment opportunities during the crisis it is believed that a greater proportion of young people stayed on in the school system or in alternative education and training programmes which may have contributed to reducing the overall rate of ESL. However, as the apprenticeship and alternative pathways relying heavily on the construction industry went into decline during the crisis, this resulted in many early school leavers, particularly males, entering unemployment or changing their occupational direction ⁽⁴⁷⁾.</p>

8. Factors positively contributing to the effectiveness of VET in reducing ELET

Stakeholders interviewed mentioned several factors positively contributing to the effectiveness of VET which in turn can reduce early leaving from education and training (ELET)/ early leaving from VET (ELVET). The factors reported are:

8.1. National/regional policy factors

The government has a comprehensive policy on addressing educational disadvantage (DEIS) which has a focus on early school leaving. This political focus on ESL encourages fosters the provision and promotion of high quality VET programmes or VET type measures through, for example, Youthreach, Leaving certificate applied programme and other intervention type initiatives like the Youth Guarantee in an effort to reduce early school leaving via efforts to retain in the education system those at risk of dropping out of school early, and re-engage in education and learning those who have already dropped out early.

The existence of measures to tackle early school leaving which include VET type approaches e.g. Youthreach and community training centres, leaving

⁽⁴⁷⁾ ESRI (2010). *No way back? The dynamics of early school leaving*. <http://www.igc.ie/download/1/Parents/Parents%20NO%20WAY%20BACK%20THE%20DYNAMICS%20OF%20EARLY%20SCHOOL%20LEAVING%20-%20E.S.R.I..pdf> [accessed 2.5.2017].

certificate applied, offering alternatively pathways to learners who have dropped out or who are at risk of dropping out of school.

The increased collaboration between different stakeholders in the context of the recent government reforms e.g. Department of Education and Skills and Department of Social Protection, to improving the current system of Further Education and Training, particularly in respect to the development of a new monitoring system by SOLAS (the new Further Education and Training Authority).

The reform of the further education and training sector integrating existing education and training programmes under one body, SOLAS (regarding organisation) and ETBs (regarding delivery), which will make it easier to ensure coherence between programmes offered and the monitoring of outcomes.

While not currently used to link individuals up with follow up support measures, the DES conduct annual reports ⁽⁴⁸⁾ using a system (based on social security numbers for each individual) which has the ability to track early school leavers and monitor their outcomes in terms of their destinations– this could potentially provide information which may contribute to the supply, design, and planning of VET approaches to reduce ESL.

The implementation of the EU Council recommendation on the Youth Guarantee for Ireland which will match young unemployed people to, among other options, suitable, quality second chance education offers. As part of the Youth Guarantee for Ireland, a system whereby every secondary school must notify the relevant (local) education and training board (ETB) will be introduced so that early follow up on alternative education and training options can be presented to early leavers.

Government reforms introduced to reform the further education and training sector, which includes the introduction of a new Further Education and Training strategy 2014-19 and a commitment to review all FET programmes (e.g. a review of the Youthreach programme is planned for 2017) judging from interviews conducted is seen as something that will have positive impacts on various outcomes including the rate of early school leaving.

8.2. Systemic features of the (VET) education system

The highly supportive environment of second chance education programmes like Youthreach and Community Training Centres which operate in a high support

⁽⁴⁸⁾ Department of Education and Skills (2013). *Early leavers: what next? Report on early leavers from post-primary schools – pupils enrolled in 2009/10 and not in 2010/11*. <http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Early-Leavers-What-Next-.pdf> [accessed 2.5.2017]. This is the first annual report.

environment for students, are student friendly and focused, helping to re-engage young people back into education and retain them to completion of their course with certification.

Monetary incentive to encourage attendance/retention in some programmes e.g. Youthreach and CTCs.

Some of the measures involved are not just delivering to the curriculum but take a more holistic approach to the learner with an emphasis on personal and social development and can include a funded guidance service in some education centres.

Good relationships at a local level between providers and employers in terms of work experience/placement opportunities and strategies to maintain them (e.g. open days, networking).

8.3. Features of the labour market

Lack of job opportunities in the labour market during the crisis helped to boost demand for further education and training places and potentially contributed to the retention to completion of a greater proportion of students than normal.

9. Factors constraining the effectiveness of VET to reduce ELET

Stakeholders interviewed highlighted various factors which constrain the effectiveness of VET to reduce ELET/ELVET.

9.1. National/regional policy factors

There are no recent reviews of the existing measures in order to determine overall effectiveness of the programmes in tackling early leaving.

Little use of available data to inform development or improvement of existing measures.

No learner database on the further education and training (FET) side but one is in development, overseen by SOLAS.

9.2. Systemic features of the VET education system

The seemingly pervasive perception of vocational education and training as the second best/last resort option to more formal academic education options. The emphasis has always tended to be on progressing from mainstream second level education to third level education, evidenced in the high proportion of the population in some age categories with a higher education qualification (among the highest in Europe).

The inability to access higher education directly via the mainstream vocational option (LCA) at upper secondary level perhaps putting young people off taking that route.

Lack of clear progression routes between FET and the higher education system.

A drawback with some of the provision is that it does not operate all year round (a lot of provision mirrors the timing of the traditional academic year).

In the context of the reform of the further education & training system and the institution of a monitoring system, an increasing emphasis is expected to be placed on outcomes in terms of employment and progression. However, a very vital part of current provision for ESLs is the high support context in which it operates, focusing on developing the learners' soft skills before they can progress on to education and training. Value needs to be placed on soft outcomes in order for second chance provision to continue to be successful.

Disparity in funding/resource provision between mainstream and second chance education provision e.g. whilst students in mainstream education centres, have access to the national educational psychology services, Youthreach students do not.

The lack of capital investment in alternative centres of education catering for VET learners.

9.3. Features of the labour market

Lack of awareness among employers of the full range of employment supports and recruitment possibilities.