Activity 1: How can we tell if a learner is at risk of early leaving from education and training?

**Target group:** the main target group of this activity are VET practitioners. Policy-makers and experts who would like to provide guidance or training, or develop tools, to help practitioners identify learners at risk of early leaving, can also find this activity useful.

**Duration of the activity:** 1 hour 30 minutes, divided into two tasks: task 1 (30 minutes) and task 2 (60 minutes).

**Type of exercises:** individual work, guided consultation of Cedefop toolkit, and work in small groups. Plenary sessions involving participants from several small groups can follow at the end of each task to discuss the results.

## Task 1. Understanding who is likely to leave education and training early

### Individual reflection (5’)

Please think about your current students/trainees and who you think is more likely to leave his/her studies early, why do you think so? Why do you think some of your past students left their studies early? Do you see any patterns?

Please write in small pieces of paper or sticky labels the main characteristics of students/trainees who leave their studies (one paper/label per characteristic). These notes will be shared with a small group as a preparation for discussion.

### Work in small groups (10’)

Participants share their notes on the characteristics of learners who leave their studies with the group, e.g. by sticking the notes in a flipchart or board.

The following questions aim at triggering reflection and discussion on the features of early leaving:

* **Who** is leaving education and training early? What is the profile of early leavers in terms of age, gender, socio-economic background, migrant/ethnic minority background, disability, special needs, etc.?
* **When** is early leaving happening? In which education stages and years is it more frequent?
* **Where** is early leaving happening? Which are the programmes with higher early leaving rates?
* **Why** are students leaving their studies? E.g. they dislike the programme, institution, staff or peers; did not have a placement in their preferred programme; due to health and well-being issues or conditions; because they find a job; due to family responsibilities; or to financial problems in the family; etc.

Please summarise the conclusions of your discussion in the table below:

Features of early leaving

| Who is leaving early? | When is early leaving happening?  | Where is early leaving happening? | Why are students leaving their studies?  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |  |

### Guided consultation of Cedefop toolkit (5’)

Please check the information in the toolkit about the profiles of early leavers:

Go to: [Profiles of early leavers and learners at risk of early leaving](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/toolkits/vet-toolkit-tackling-early-leaving/intervene/profiles-early-leavers-learners-risk-early-leaving).

Read through the six profiles of early leavers. Click on ‘Read more’ to read the full content on each profile.

### Work in small groups (10’)

Please discuss in groups the information on profiles available on Cedefop VET toolkit:

* When reading through these profiles, do you ‘recognise’ any of your current or past students?
* Do these profiles refer to any aspects on who, when, where and why of early leaving that you did not discuss before?

Please complete the above table 1.1 on the features of early leaving based on your discussion.

## Task 2. Preparing an early warning system to detect learners at risk of early leaving

### Developing a list of indicators

#### Guided consultation of Cedefop toolkit (5’)

Please check the information in the toolkit about the identification of learners at risk of early leaving:

Go to: [Identification of learners at risk of early leaving](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/toolkits/vet-toolkit-tackling-early-leaving/identify/identification-of-learners-at-risk-of-early-leaving).

Read through the section.

#### Work in small groups: drafting a list of indicators (15’)

The following table 1.2. presents the list of indicators included in the toolkit under Tip 1. Please work in small groups to:

* Prioritise the indicators according to the strength of association with risk of early leaving from education and training.
* Identify (potential) sources of information on the indicators listed, e.g. administrative data, student questionnaires, teacher/trainer observation, discussions with parents, etc.
* Add any other indicators that you consider relevant under the rows ‘other’.

Indicators and sources of information

|  | Indicators | Level of priority (1=low; 2=medium; 3=high) | Source of information |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Family environment | Socio-economic status of family |  |  |
| Family responsibilities (e.g. taking care of siblings) |  |  |
| Lack of family engagement and support |  |  |
| Other (please specify): |  |  |
| Attainment, behaviour and attitudes | Education underachievement (poor grades; grade repetition) |  |  |
| Absenteeism  |  |  |
| Disruptive behaviour or lack of positive involvement in activities within or outside the curriculum |  |  |
| Negative self-perception linked to education failure |  |  |
| Absence of positive future vision of oneself |  |  |
| Lack of work readiness |  |  |
| Other (please specify): |  |  |
| Health and well-being | Health circumstances (illness, substance use, pregnancy) |  |  |
| Issues related to child poverty (e.g. hunger, lack of sleep) |  |  |
| Issues related to personal, social and emotional well-being (e.g. sense of belonging to the training community; satisfaction with student-teacher relations; relations with peers; bullying) |  |  |
| Other (please specify): |  |  |
| Other | Please specify: |  |  |

### Developing tools to collect information

#### Guided consultation of Cedefop toolkit: examples of tools (5’)

Please check the following examples of tools to help identify learners at risk of early leaving:

Go to: [Capacity building for students, companies and vocational schools involved in apprenticeship-training (QUABB)](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/toolkits/vet-toolkit-tackling-early-leaving/resources/qualifizierte-ausbildungsbegleitung-betrieb). This tool includes the following *Mood barometer*.



Go to: [LYCAM (Lycée, ça m'intéresse) questionnaire](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/toolkits/vet-toolkit-tackling-early-leaving/resources/lycam-lycee-ca-minteresse-questionnaire). This questionnaire aims at helping school level practitioners identify secondary school students’ difficulties, motivations and personal views on school. It covers seven dimensions:

1. The families’ attitudes towards school (the families’ role in their children’s schooling).
2. Academic school projects (projects related to studies, interest in school, level of aspiration).
3. Academic attainment (self-evaluation by students of their capacity to achieve work and academic goals).
4. Self-confidence (relative to academic success).
5. Absenteeism (attitudes and behaviours relating to school attendance, acceptance or non-acceptance of high school rules).
6. Need for support from teachers (quality of relationships between students and teaching staff).
7. Interest in school (students’ interest in their education and school life).

#### Work in small groups: developing data collection tools (15’)

Start by briefly discussing the examples of tools consulted. The following questions aim at triggering discussion:

* Do you think the Mood barometer – or a similar tool – could be useful in your institution to detect learners at risk of early leaving? Why/why not?
* Do you think that a questionnaire similar to the LYCAM could be useful in your institution to detect learners at risk of early leaving? Why/why not?
* Do you currently use any tools to help detect learners at risk of early leaving in your institution? Please explain their main features to the other members of the group.

Please choose one of the high-priority indicators discussed in the previous exercise, for which you have indicated ‘questionnaire’ or ‘teacher/trainer observation’ as source of information. Please develop a list of items for either:

* A student questionnaire to help detect learners at risk of early leaving; *or*
* An observation sheet for teachers or trainers to help them detect signs of risk of early leaving

You can use the tables 1.3 and 1.4 below for this exercise.

Student questionnaire

| Indicator | Questionnaire items |
| --- | --- |
| E.g. satisfaction with student-teacher relations | * My teachers make an effort to help us understand: Yes/No
* I feel confident to ask questions in the classroom when there is something that I do not understand: Yes/No
* Etc.
 |
|  |  |
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Observation sheet for teachers/trainers

| Indicator | Observation sheet items |
| --- | --- |
| E.g. Lack of work readiness | * Punctuality - the student arrives on time all or most of the days: Yes/No
* Positive interaction with clients – the student is capable of positive interactions with clients adapted to his/her level of knowledge of the profession: Yes/No
* Etc.
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### Next steps and challenges in the development and use of an early warning system

#### Work in small groups: challenges to the development and use of an early warning system (15’)

Please identify challenges to the development of an early warning system to detect learners at risk of early leaving. The following table includes some questions to trigger reflection (column 2). You can list challenges in column 3.

Challenges to the development and use of an early warning system

|  | Questions for reflection | Identified challenges  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Selecting indicators | * How many indicators could be covered?
* Will these be sufficient to identify most of the at-risk learners?
* Which types of learners would be harder to identify?
 |  |
| Using administrative data | * With what frequency is administrative data updated?
* Does this allow for a timely identification of at-risk learners?
 |  |
| Developing and applying tools  | * What tools could be used?
* Do staff have the capacity and time to design these tools?
* Who would use the tools? Do practitioners have the time and conditions to apply these tools?
* When/ with what frequency? Would this allow for a timely identification of at-risk learners?
 |  |
| Monitoring learners | * Who would gather and monitor the information on students?
* How would the information be recorded?
* What measures would be taken to ensure compliance with data protection regulations?
 |  |
| Use of the information collected | * What would happen once a student is identified as being at risk of early leaving?
* What type of measures are there available to address the different issues faced by learners?
 |  |
| Other issues |  |  |

#### Work in small groups: next steps in the development and use of an early warning system (5’)

Please discuss and agree on the next steps for the introduction or improvement of an early warning system at your institution.

| Next steps |
| --- |
| E.g.1. Propose the development of an early warning system to the leadership team.
2. Clarify what administrative information can be used in the early warning system.
3. Discuss what tools could be developed to improve the data available.
4. Agree who will design and implement the tools, and with what frequency will these be used.
5. Agree who will gather and monitor all the relevant information per learner, and how it will be recorded. Discuss data protection issues.
6. Establish a protocol to follow once a learner is identified as being at risk of early leaving.

Etc. |