

# Retention Caravan (Retention taskforce as from 2013)

*Fastholdelseskaravanen*

## Beneficiaries

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-  **Learners at risk of early leaving from education and training**
-  **Migrants / refugees**

At risk VET students from ethnic minorities, and their parents.

Pedagogical staff (incl. teachers, management and counsellors) at VET institutions with high ELVET rates amongst students from ethnic minorities.

## Countries

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-  **Denmark**

## Education level and sector

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-  **Secondary education**
-  **Upper secondary education**
-  **Upper secondary vocational education and training (school-based)**
-  **Upper secondary vocational education and training (work-based learning)**

Upper secondary Vocational Education and Training (VET)

## Type of policy/initiative

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-  **Prevention**
-  **Intervention**

Preventative/Intervention

## Level of implementation / Scope

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-  **National level**

National

## Stage of implementation

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## Completed

The Retention Caravan was implemented in 2008-12.

The retention Taskforce (since 2013) continues several of the initiatives and goes beyond the original target group of VET students from ethnic minorities to all those from disadvantaged backgrounds

## Aims of policy/initiative

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The Retention Caravan aimed to support the retention of VET students from ethnic minorities - in particular boys.

Concretely, the objectives were:

- to improve young people's motivation for choosing VET, and increase their understanding of the value of VET, and the career opportunities it leads to
- to improve the retention rate in participating VET schools by 20% by the end of the project period
- to support the government target that 85% of young people should complete upper secondary education by 2010, and 95% should complete upper secondary education by 2015
- to support the labour market needs for an educated workforce

## Features and types of activities implemented

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A range of initiatives were implemented at the participating schools to support teachers' skills development (focus was on the institutional level, and not the students themselves). The initiatives targeted the individual schools' challenges and included:

- Support to VET institutions and teachers in developing ways to tackle Early Leaving in Vocational Education and Training (ELVET) amongst ethnic minorities, e.g. through a training for teachers which includes: "how to teach with motivation and with inclusive methods" and "how to teach with alternative teaching methods", so that the young people feel accepted and recognised for who they are.
- Engagement of parents in their children's education, e.g. through teachers visiting the VET students' homes.
- Development of tools that could engage the VET students from ethnic minorities and make them feel welcome at the schools and in the future labour market, e.g. through specific mentor programmes and intensive advisory programmes for individual students.
- Help schools to develop young people's skills in finding an apprenticeship on their own.

## Resources

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The Retention Caravan was financed jointly by the Ministry of Education and the European Social Fund. In total, 71 million DKK was allocated for the Retention Caravan in the period between 2008 and 2012. ESF contributed with 47.8 million DKK.

The Retention Taskforce is financed by the Ministry of Education.

## Evaluation of the measure

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The measure was evaluated externally at the interim stage and at the final stage and also drew on the evaluations of individual initiatives carried out during the project period. Evaluating the measure was included as part of the design of the measure, especially as it was supported by ESF.

## Evidence of effectiveness of the measure

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The overall impact of the Retention Caravan was positive in terms of retention. Participating schools reduced drop-out rates to a greater extent than non-participating schools (28.0% compared to 24.6%).

However, participating schools did not reduce the drop-out rate amongst students of non-Danish origin more than non-participating schools (22.2% compared to 25.9%). This may be because there were twice as many students of non-Danish origin at participating VET schools than at non-participating schools. The challenge of retaining this group may thus be of another scale at the participating schools.

Interestingly, the initiatives also had a positive impact on the retention of disadvantaged Danish VET students.

Staff in participant VET schools thought that the initiatives enabled them to better deal with diversity, as well as create attractive learning environments and increased contacts with parents.

## Success factors

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The following success factors are based on the testimonies of participants in the measure interviewed for the Cedefop study:

1. Targeting the institutional level at VET schools: the measure did not target the individual students' lack of abilities to complete VET, but instead focused on what the VET institutions could do to improve retention. The rationale behind it is that committed teachers and managers play an important role in the retention of young people.
2. Flexibility in terms of the target group: while the initial target group were learners from ethnic minorities at risk of early leaving, schools could include other at-risk students. This was considered important to prevent the stigmatisation of learners from ethnic minorities.
3. Development of close relations between young people and adults: skills development initiatives provided teachers with tools to develop positive relations with students. This was considered to have a strong impact on student retention.
4. Development of a professional identity amongst students: developing study environments, and implementing initiatives which improved the students' understanding of the professional language contributed to the development of a professional identity.
5. External and internal collaboration: participating VET staff cooperated in the development of innovative teaching methods. There were also events to share knowledge and experiences with teachers at other VET institutions

## Contact details for further information

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### Contact name

Helga Bojesen

### Contact telephone

+45 3392 5746

**Contact website**

<http://fahot.dk/FastholdelsesTaskforce/>

**Contact email**

helga.bojesen [at] stukuvn.dk

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