

Experimentation of the association AFEV

Beneficiaries

 **Learners at risk of early leaving from education and training**

All students/learners (including VET students at risk of dropping out at upper-secondary level).

Countries

 **France**

Education level and sector

 **Secondary education**  **Lower secondary education**
 **Lower secondary vocational education and training (school-based)**

School based VET (from primary to upper secondary education). [1]

[1] AFEV actions in general also include general education.

Type of policy/initiative

 **Intervention**

Intervention

Level of implementation / Scope

 **National level**

National

Stage of implementation

 **On-going**  **Discontinued**

Mainstream since 1991. AFEV activities in VET schools were piloted as an experiment between 2009 and 2012. These were not put into general use afterwards but some actions in VET schools are still in place.

Aims of policy/initiative

Volunteer students at AFEV provide long-term individualised support to disadvantaged VET students in order to reduce absenteeism and the risk of dropping out due to low academic achievement.

Features and types of activities implemented

AFEV is specialised in providing individualised support to children and teenagers living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and who are potentially at risk of dropping out. Activities include:

- **Methodological support** – updating skills in general courses, assistance with homework, assistance in using ICTs, improving relationships with teachers and colleagues.
- Accompanying the learner in his/her **orientation and professional ambitions** – providing professional guidance, assistance in finding a traineeship, writing a CV, informing the family about VET.
- Accompanying the learner in **his/her personal development** – assistance in finding adequate support services, discovering the city and any cultural activities that they are unaware of.

As of 2009 activities are also organised within the VET schools, such as workshops, cultural/sports activities, debates, festivities, etc.

Resources

The budget for the experiment was of €273,438 for the three years. The experiment with VET schools was concluded in 2012. No other funds were provided afterwards.

Evaluation of the measure

An external evaluation was conducted on the actions developed by the AFEV in VET schools in 2012 by “Trajectoires Groupe Reflex” (funded by the Experimentation funds for young people (Ministry of Youth)).

A statistical comparative analysis was undertaken based on survey results. Questionnaires were distributed to VET learners receiving AFEV support as well as to a control group of VET learners at risk who were not receiving the AFEV support. Surveys were distributed to three groups of learners between 2009 – 12 at the beginning and end of each school year and to the same learners for two or three more consecutive years, depending on the group.

Qualitative interviews were also undertaken each year with about 35 people (and with 65 people in 2011) namely, AFEV volunteers, teachers and VET students. For the students, these focused on the impact of AFEV on their choices and scholastic well-being.

Evidence of effectiveness of the measure

Results show that VET students in the measure:

- increase their self-confidence and feel more confident about their education pathway and professional future after receiving individual support
- broaden their views of their opportunities and improve their knowledge on useful services they can use to obtain information on VET/job opportunities
- show a better capacity to commit to their education: they have a better capacity to concentrate and participate in class
- have a much better image of VET after receiving the AFEV support and this positive image is considerably higher than for the control group

Success factors

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

1. The thorough design of AFEV activities and training of volunteers: AFEV provides a working framework for volunteers including objectives and guidelines. In addition, all volunteers are trained by AFEV coordinators before providing individual support, notably on the challenges that providing support to a teenager (from a disadvantaged background) entails. The AFEV coordinators thus ensure that the aims and guidelines of the measure are correctly implemented.
2. The long-term partnerships developed by the AFEV: AFEV is a well-established association that built long-term partnerships with the Ministry of Education. AFEV is thus well-known by local educational authorities. These partnerships facilitated the experiment in VET schools and secured funding. In addition, AFEV local coordinators work on building local partnerships with VET schools (heads of schools and teachers) in order to develop new activities and apply jointly for calls for projects, ensuring a continuation of its activities in VET schools.
3. AFEV is an external actor, different from educational institutions and acts with volunteers: AFEV volunteers act as an important external player (i.e. external to school, family, and neighbourhood/social background) for the VET learner. This externality helps to build trust between the VET learner and the AFEV volunteer which is key to guaranteeing the positive impacts of the individual support provided. The fact that individual support is provided by volunteers has a symbolic impact on AFEV support activities: it shows VET learners from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds that someone cares for them without asking anything in return.
4. Capacity to adapt to its public: providing individual school support to teenagers is quite different than providing support to primary pupils. Teenagers tend to be reluctant to participate in AFEV initiatives. AFEV understood that solely providing school support would not be sufficient to guarantee their participation. This is why it developed various branches of work to diversify its action. It works with VET learners on their professional guidance (e.g. finding an internship placement) and it involves the participation in cultural activities that the VET learner and the AFEV volunteer chose together. AFEV thus adapts its offer to the VET learner's demands.

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