

Voluntary Labour Corps (VLC)

Ochotnicze Hufce Pracy (OHP)

Description

In Poland, the Voluntary Labour Corps initiative offers support to young people at risk of early leaving, unemployment or those who are already unemployed. Personalised support, mentoring, vocational counselling, guidance and job matching activities aim to ensure young people find their place in labour market.

Beneficiaries

-  **Early leavers from education and training**
-  **Unemployed young people**

There are two main target groups:

- Young people aged 15-18 who failed to continue compulsory education and are now out of the educational system.
- Young people aged 18-25 falling into the Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) category, including jobseekers, people seeking retraining or unemployed; upper secondary school and higher education graduates struggling to position themselves on the labour market and at risk of unemployment or already unemployed.

Countries

 **Poland**

Education level and sector

-  **Secondary education**
-  **Lower secondary education**
-  **Lower secondary general education**
-  **Upper secondary education**
-  **Upper secondary general education**

Lower secondary and vocational upper secondary

Type of policy/initiative

-  **Prevention**
-  **Compensation**

Prevention and Compensation

Level of implementation / Scope

 **National level**

National

Stage of implementation

 **On-going**

Mainstream. Operational since 1958, constantly adapted to fit the needs of the country's changing social, economic and political context.

Aims of policy/initiative

The main aims of the VLC are to:

- Help 15 to 18 year olds complete their compulsory education and obtain a vocational qualification in a given profession. It also helps them develop the personal and social skills needed for their adult life.
- Help 18 to 25 year olds implement various labour market initiatives to reduce their social and professional inactivity.

Features and types of activities implemented

The VLC organisational units perform 2 kinds of activities:

- For 15-18 year olds - personalised, continuous assistance, mentoring and monitoring of the students' learning process; these activities are carried out by more than 200 care and education units.
- For 18-25 year olds - vocational counselling and guidance, job matching services, vocational training and information; these services are delivered by more than 500 training units.

As the VLC is an organisation which doesn't have its own schools, participants/students are directed to the public general lower secondary schools or the basic vocational upper secondary schools, geographically located close to a given VLC unit. Each VLC participant/student is assisted and supported by an educator who will monitor progress in learning, organise remedial classes, monitor working conditions, liaise with families/stakeholders, organise psychological and educational assistance, provide assistance in case of crises.

Resources

As a state-run organisation, the VLC is financed from the State budget.

Evaluation of the measure

The measure is evaluated internally and periodically, on the basis of both qualitative and quantitative indicators.

Evidence of effectiveness of the measure

Overall, according to the above evidence, the initiative has positive results regarding Early Leaving in Education and Leaving (ELET) reduction (in 2014, there were 36,306 VLC students) and has become more effective over the last few years.

According to VLC internal documentation, in 2014, 86.5% of students successfully completed a lower secondary programme, 95.6% obtained their final vocational qualification and 66.3% of VLC graduates were employed, studying or training.

Success factors

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

1. Multilevel organisational structure: operating at all administrative levels, the VLC implements its actions and projects simultaneously through several hundred units, located in all provinces (e.g. coordination and quality monitoring at central and regional levels, development of activities according to the conditions and needs of local communities at local level).
2. Partnerships with/involvement of other stakeholders: the statutory and/or informal cooperation of the VLC with a large number of diverse stakeholders at national, regional and local levels (including families), makes it easier to reach out to potential and actual early leavers and to deal with various aspects and causes of their early school leaving (and social exclusion).
3. A non-standard educational model, valued by the students: thanks to a close cooperation between the VLC and local employers, adjusting to the demand for a specific type of workforce on the local labour market, VLC graduates enter the labour market earlier than the average school graduate.
4. Individual support and mentoring: every student is continuously supported and coached by one or several educators who provide them individual mentoring, guidelines and counselling, enhancing their chances for a successful reintegration into the education and training system.
5. Staff's enthusiasm and commitment: educators not only closely cooperate with schools and employers, but also develop a trusting relationship with their students and their families/legal guardians by supporting and motivating them.
6. Autonomy of educators in dealing with tasks on the ground: educators can autonomously organise their work on the ground (e.g. designing and implementing support actions in relation to the students' individual needs).
7. VLC's specific culture: the long tradition and experience of the VLC staff shaped a specific institutional culture when it comes to dealing with young people at risk of early leaving from education and training and with social exclusion in general (e.g. use of a specific vocabulary). The activities are based solely on a positive pedagogy and inclusive approaches focusing on each individual student, fostering a sense of belonging.

Contact details for further information

Contact name

Slawomir Mecina, head of office

Contact telephone

48225784755

Contact website

<http://www.ohp.pl/>

Contact email

s.mecina [at] ohp.pl

Related intervention approaches



Second chance measures

Source URL: <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/en/tools/vet-toolkit-tackling-early-leaving/resources/ochotnicze-hufce-pracy-ohp-voluntary-labour>