



## Second chance measures

### Problem statement

---

#### **Addressed problem: Disengaged young people exiting education and training**

The process leading a young person to leave education and training early is cumulative and complex. However, it is not – or should not be – a one-way pathway. Many early leavers wish to return to education. Second chance measures provide opportunities for re-entry and support young people to acquire a qualification.

There are many reasons why young people leave education early. Second chance measures are often designed to address these barriers. For example, some young people need to work due to their own or their family's economic situation, while others have caring responsibilities. To accommodate these circumstances, second chance education opportunities may be delivered outside standard study hours or through flexible formats, such as distance or blended learning (combining online and face-to-face instruction).

Another factor contributing to early leaving is that traditional, classroom-based approaches to learning do not suit all young people. Second chance provision typically adopts alternative methodologies, often inspired by VET pedagogies (e.g. more hands-on, practice-oriented, and tailored to learner's interests) which can enhance engagement.

For young people [facing complex barriers to learning](#) (e.g. health issues, housing instability), some second chance measures adopt a holistic approach. These combine formal learning with targeted support services, using a multi-professional case management approach to address individual needs.

## SECOND CHANCE MEASURES

CLASSROOM-BASED APPROACH TO LEARNING IS NOT APPROPRIATE FOR ALL YOUNG PEOPLE

SECOND CHANCE OPPORTUNITIES TEND TO USE A DIFFERENT METHODOLOGY, OFTEN INSPIRED BY VET PEDAGOGIES (E.G. MORE HANDS-ON, MORE TAILORED TO THE INTERESTS OF THE LEARNER) WHICH CAN BE MORE APPEALING

SECOND CHANCE MEASURES CAN ALSO TAKE A HOLISTIC APPROACH AND PROVIDE SUPPORT TO TACKLE LEARNING BARRIERS THROUGH A MULTI-PROFESSIONAL CASE MANAGEMENT APPROACH

REACH OUT TO YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH LOCAL SUPPORT

START WITH AN ASSESSMENT OF THE LEARNERS' EXISTING KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND INTERESTS

ENGAGE AND DEVELOP THE 'WHOLE PERSON'

CREATE AN ALTERNATIVE TO MAINSTREAM EDUCATION WHICH IS FLEXIBLE AND ADAPTS SCHOOL TO STUDENT'S ABILITIES AND NEEDS

INCLUDE MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITIES

USE APPROPRIATE TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODS

- SECOND CHANCE MEASURES PROVIDE LEARNERS WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO GAIN A FORMAL QUALIFICATION THEY DID NOT OBTAIN WHILST IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOL
- THESE SOFT OUTCOMES CAN HELP TO PREPARE THEM FOR A RETURN TO FORMAL LEARNING OR TO ENTER EMPLOYMENT. SECOND CHANCE OPPORTUNITIES MIGHT ALSO LEAD TO POSITIVE OUTCOMES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE FACING COMPLEX BARRIERS TO LEARNING

LINK SECOND CHANCE MEASURES WITH FORMAL EDUCATION

## Beneficiaries

**Early leavers from education and training**

**Migrants / refugees**

Second chance measures can support individuals who have already dropped out of education. In some cases, they may also be appropriate for young people who are still in education but are at high risk of early leaving.

## Addressing the problem

### **Tips: How to re-engage young people in VET through effective second chance measures?**

Second chance measures can take different forms. Some provide an opportunity to acquire a formal qualification. These programmes typically involve individualised provision, use alternative methodologies compared to initial education, and may be delivered in flexible formats (e.g. part-time).

Other second chance measures do not lead directly to a formal qualification. Instead, they aim to support young people in progressing towards re-entry into formal education or transition to employment. These more comprehensive measures often start by rebuilding motivation for learning, while supporting the development of key skills and behaviours needed to access formal education or work. At the same time, they address a wide range of barriers (e.g. related to health, poverty, or social circumstances).

Second chance measures may also be implemented as part of activation efforts of the public employment services. Second chance measures may also be implemented as part of

activation policies delivered by public employment services.

The following tips are intended to support policy makers and practitioners involved in the design and delivery of both vocational second chance programmes and comprehensive measures (i.e. those addressing a broad range of barriers to learning). They are based on Cedefop research on effective practices, as well as other relevant evidence.

## **Tip 1: Reach out to young people through local support**

Successful second chance provision is embedded in the local community, enabling providers to effectively reach and engage young people in their area.

Engagement often begins with a very 'light touch' approach, gradually building trust with the young person. This can lead to more formal enrolment in a programme and sustained participation. Second chance measures typically involve a range of staff beyond teaching personnel, including those responsible for outreach and engagement activities.

Close cooperation with other professionals who are in contact with young people (e.g. social and healthcare workers) is essential. Local services should be supported and empowered to identify and refer young people at-risk to second chance opportunities.

Social media and digital outreach strategies can further strengthen engagement by raising awareness and capturing young people's interest in available opportunities. In addition, digital referral platforms that connect social workers, employers and second chance providers can facilitate information sharing and help ensure that young people access appropriate programmes.

## **Tip 2: Create a sustainable and attractive alternative to mainstream education**

Most second chance measures provide an alternative to mainstream education. This may relate to group size (often smaller than in mainstream settings), programme organisation (e.g. evening or weekend classes, blended or fully online options), access requirements (e.g. removing barriers such as minimum prior qualifications), teaching methods, or learning content. Curricula and educational practices are designed flexibly, with the aim of adapting provision to learners' abilities and needs, rather than requiring learners to adapt to rigid structures.

A key distinguishing feature is the learning environment. Second chance measures typically aim to create a supportive, inclusive and respectful setting. This helps young people feel valued, treated as equals, and able to build trusting relationships with staff. Such an environment is particularly important for those who have previously struggled in formal education settings or who come from non-supportive backgrounds.

In addition to addressing learning needs, second chance provision often integrates wider support services, such as legal, financial, housing or therapeutic support, to respond to the broader challenges faced by learners.

## Tip 3: Engage and develop the 'whole person'

Second chance measures typically take a broad approach, addressing the physical, emotional, and psychological well-being of learners - though the extent varies depending on the nature of measure.

Comprehensive programmes often employ multi-professional teams that first reach out to young people and engage them in participation. These teams then identify and address the full range of barriers to learning. For example, social and healthcare workers may collaborate with teaching staff, and learners may have access to counselling or other support services. A [case management](#) approach allows this multi-faceted support to be tailored to the individual. Digital platforms shared across multi-professional teams, can be particularly useful for managing individual cases, ensuring visibility, and maintaining cohesion in the support provided.

Teaching staff in second chance measures often see their role as extending beyond teaching to include social and emotional support, helping learners work through personal challenges. Digital well-being check-in tools can assist in this process by monitoring learners' emotional states and identifying emerging issues before they escalate into dropout risks.

[Coaching or mentoring programmes](#) are also commonly integrated into second chance measures.

These activities form a core part of the support offered, running in parallel with, or in preparation for, formal education and training. They help participants re-discover an interest in learning and develop the behaviours and competences needed to succeed in formal learning or the workplace.

## Tip 4: Start with an assessment of learners' existing knowledge, skills and interests

Learners accessing second chance measures come from different starting points and face varying barriers to learning. The knowledge and skills 'gaps' they need to address depend on when they left school and their prior attendance and achievements. The knowledge and skills "gaps" they need to address depend on when they left school and their prior attendance and achievements.

Second chance measures are typically individualised, taking account of prior learning and work experience. This is especially important for young people who may have partially completed studies or acquired skills and competences through work, non-formal or informal learning. Second chance measures are typically individualised, taking account of prior learning and skills.

An individualised approach should begin with an assessment of learners' existing knowledge, skills, and interests. The goal of this assessment is to boost confidence and help learners identify learning objectives and an overall pathway. It should also consider any additional support needs and determine how these will be addressed.

Digital initial assessment tools can map learners' knowledge, skills, interests, and barriers in a non-threatening, engaging way. These tools also produce

comprehensive learner profiles, often more detailed than those generated by traditional interviews or exams. Additionally, the wider use of digital portfolios for recognising skills and prior learning can streamline validation of existing competences while empowering young people.

For a more in-depth discussion, see the intervention approach on [flexible education and training systems](#).

## Tip 5: Link second chance measures with formal education

Second chance measures should provide alternative pathways toward a formal, recognised qualification or employment. This can involve delivering the qualification within the second chance programme or preparing learners to return to mainstream education. Such measures need to operate within a flexible system, allowing young people to progress in their learning or move laterally to another option at the same level. Digital qualification frameworks and e-credentials (e.g., badges and digital certificates) can facilitate formal recognition and transfer of learning outcomes between second chance programmes and mainstream qualifications.

Strong links with the mainstream education system are essential. These connections can enable referrals in both directions and support the awarding of formal qualifications - or components such as units or modules - through second chance provision. In some cases, second chance measures may even be located within mainstream schools.

Employer engagement is also crucial. Collaborating with local companies to provide on-the-job training, apprenticeships, or work-based learning ensures that learners gain relevant skills for the local labour market and supports successful career pathways. Digital employer engagement platforms can connect second chance providers with local businesses for placements, simulations, and structured work experiences.

Flexibility can also be enhanced through recognition of prior learning and modular course structures, allowing learners to follow a tailored learning path. AI-powered labour market intelligence tools can help align curricula with current and emerging skills needs in the local and regional economy.

For a more in-depth discussion, see the intervention approach on [flexible education and training systems](#).

## Tip 6: Offer flexible provision

Many young people returning to second chance education have other commitments and demands on their daily lives. Flexibility in provision is therefore essential, including how learning is delivered and how enrolment and registration are managed.

Flexibility also extends to attendance requirements. Young learners may face complex personal circumstances that affect their ability to attend regularly. Avoiding punitive measures for non-attendance and working collaboratively with

learners to address underlying issues is more effective in a second chance environment. Rigid requirements - such as attending eight hours a day, five days a week - may not be realistic. [Alternative, achievable, part-time attendance patterns](#) can help retain learners and support programme completion.

Asynchronous and on-demand learning content, such as recorded lessons, self-paced modules, and downloadable resources, allows learners to engage with the curriculum alongside work, caring, or other commitments without stigma or penalty. Additionally, rolling digital enrolment systems, which enable learners to join at any point during the year rather than fixed intake dates, help bridge the gap between a learner's decision to return to education and their ability to start.

## Tip 7: Promote positive attitudes

Negative perceptions of second chance education among teachers, professionals, parents, and peers can act as significant barriers to participation. Such stigma may also hinder learners' progression back into mainstream education or training after completing a second chance measure.

To address this, it is important to strengthen the credibility and visibility of second chance provision. This can be achieved by ensuring that learning outcomes are formally accredited and linked to clear progression pathways, including recognised qualifications and access to further education, training, or employment. Strong partnerships with employers can further reinforce second chance education as a valid and valuable pathway.

Promoting positive attitudes among mainstream teachers and trainers is particularly important. As key referral agents, their perceptions can directly influence learners' decisions to engage with second chance opportunities. Ensuring that these professionals are well-informed about the purpose, structure, and benefits of second chance measures - and the profiles of learners who may benefit from them - is essential.

Providing targeted training for mainstream educators on supporting young people at risk, including awareness of second chance pathways, can help reduce stigma and improve referral practices.

## Tip 8: Use appropriate teaching and learning methods

Second chance measures should apply flexible and learner-centred pedagogies, often drawing on approaches from vocational education and training (VET). These may include [work-based learning](#), company visits, and practical activities in workshops. [Integrating theoretical content with practical application](#) helps ensure relevance and supports learner engagement, particularly for those who have previously disengaged from education.

Strong cooperation with employers is essential to provide authentic learning environments and opportunities for in-company learning. Such partnerships can enhance the quality and credibility of second chance provision.

Second chance learners, particularly young adult returners, often have different

motivations and learning preferences compared to those in mainstream education. As a result, an adult learning approach may be appropriate. This includes offering a broad and flexible curriculum that supports critical reflection, personal development, and the acquisition of meaningful, transferable skills.

Adapting teaching methods to learners' needs and experiences can improve participation, retention, and overall learning outcomes.

## Tip 9: Include motivational activities

**Motivational activities** can play a key role in second chance provision by supporting learners' confidence, engagement, and overall well-being. They offer opportunities to develop social, communication, and teamwork skills, while also strengthening relationships between learners and staff.

Such activities often take place in informal settings, which can encourage open interaction and trust. This can be particularly beneficial for learners facing external barriers to participation, as it creates space for tailored social and emotional support.

Motivational activities can also help learners reflect on their personal circumstances, better understand the challenges they face, and identify possible solutions. As part of a holistic approach, they contribute to improved participation, retention, and progression outcomes.

## Tip 10: Monitor progress and ensure continuous improvement

Effective second chance measures should include systematic monitoring and evaluation processes to track learners' progress and improve programme quality over time.

At the individual level, regular follow-up and feedback mechanisms can help identify emerging challenges, adapt support, and maintain learner engagement. This may include ongoing assessment of learning progress, well-being, and participation, supported by personalised learning plans.

At programme level, collecting and analysing data on participation, retention, completion, and progression outcomes is essential. This evidence can inform continuous improvement, ensuring that provision remains responsive to learners' needs and labour market demands.

Feedback from learners, staff, and employers should also be actively gathered and used to refine programme design and delivery. Digital tracking systems and learner management platforms can support real-time monitoring, early identification of dropout risks, and more coordinated support across multi-professional teams.

A strong focus on evaluation and quality assurance helps ensure that second chance measures remain effective, relevant, and sustainable.




See [here](#) for more detailed information on monitoring and evaluation.

## Expected outcomes

For some learners, second chance measures provide an opportunity to gain a formal qualification they did not obtain while in mainstream school. For others, more 'soft' outcomes are equally important, such as increased self-awareness, a clearer plan for the future, or improved social and emotional skills.

These soft outcomes can help prepare learners for a return to formal learning or for entry into employment. Second chance opportunities may also lead to positive outcomes for young people facing complex barriers to learning, by providing targeted support to address underlying issues, such as substance abuse, housing, or health challenges.

The following outcomes can be expected at different levels:

 <b>INDIVIDUAL</b>	 <b>INSTITUTIONAL</b>	 <b>SYSTEM</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive attitude to learning and education and training</li> <li>• Improved well-being</li> <li>• Social, economic, and psychological challenges addressed</li> <li>• Improved educational outcomes</li> <li>• Improved basic skills</li> <li>• Improved work habits and social skills</li> <li>• Clear and achievable learning and career goals</li> <li>• Greater agency in one's own learning, supported by personalised digital pathways</li> <li>• Better access to information about learning and career opportunities, supported by digital platforms and AI-assisted exploration tools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Referral systems from schools to other services are implemented and used effectively</li> <li>• Reduced drop-out from second chance measures</li> <li>• More consistent and transparent referral processes, enabled by digital platforms connecting second chance providers with relevant stakeholders</li> <li>• Earlier identification and targeted support for learners at risk of dropping out, supported by improved data and analytics</li> <li>• Strengthened cooperation between education providers, social services, and employers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interconnected services across education, employment, and social support systems are being used</li> <li>• Increased rates of young people returning to mainstream education after participation in second chance measures</li> <li>• Increased rates of young people attaining an upper secondary qualification after participation in second chance measures</li> <li>• Interoperable digital systems enabling seamless transitions between second chance and mainstream provision</li> <li>• Increased visibility and recognition of second chance qualifications and credentials in the labour market, supported by digital verification systems</li> <li>• Improved evidence base for policy-making through systematic monitoring and evaluation of outcomes</li> </ul>

## Related protective factors

---



**Positive self-perception  
linked to learning ability**

## Related resources

---

### Statistics and data

Statistics and data

#### **Policies and measures to help early leavers re-enter the education and training system**

Most countries in Europe have developed policies and measures to help early leavers re-enter the education and training system such as second chance education, guidance and youth guarantees.

Austria Belgium Bulgaria Croatia Cyprus Czechia Denmark  
 Estonia EU level Finland France Germany Greece Hungary  
 Ireland Italy Latvia Lithuania Luxembourg Malta  
 Netherlands Norway Poland Portugal Romania Slovakia  
 Slovenia Spain Sweden The Republic of North Macedonia Türkiye  
 United Kingdom

### Good practices

Good practice

Good practice

## Second Chance School of Matosinhos

The Second Chance School of Matosinhos in Portugal offers a unique education and training programme. Learners design their own training plan which includes vocational training, artistic training, personal and social development and educational support.

 Portugal

## Crafts Square

*Piazza dei Mestieri*

In Italy, 'Crafts Square' offers young people, unemployed young people and adults with an alternative educational offer with a good balance between practical and theoretical courses. The environment created by the 'Craft Square' aims to ensure learners feel understood, supported and valued.

 Italy

Good practice

## Second Chance School - Luxembourg

*L'école de la deuxième chance - E2C*

The Second Chance School in Luxembourg (E2C) aims to re-engage early leavers back into education. The education/personal well-being and development of the learner is at the heart of the E2C pedagogy.

 Luxembourg

Good practice

## Second chance schools - France

*Écoles de la deuxième chance*

French second chance schools (E2Cs) offer training programmes which incorporate individualised learning paths tailored to the needs of each participant.

 France

Good practice

## Voluntary Labour Corps (VLC)

*Ochotnicze Hufce Pracy (OHP)*

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.

 Poland

Good practice

## Road Map: Education and career guidance for second chances

Personalised education guidance for new opportunities in municipal schools of adult education.

 Spain

Good practice

## Comprehensive pathways for the integration of young people

Programme for young people implemented by the cooperative "Jovent" offering comprehensive pathways of guidance, training, social inclusion and labour market insertion.

 Spain

Good practice

## Back-to-school structures (SRE) (also known as New Chance Schools)

Compensation structures for early school leavers wanting to come back to school to get general or technical high school diploma ('*baccalauréat*', '*certificat d'aptitude professionnelle*').

 France

Good practice

## Spanish Association of Second Chance Schools (E2O España)

*Asociación Española de Escuelas de Segunda Oportunidad (E2O España)*

The Second Chance School offer practical and effective solutions to all young people in Spain without a job or qualification, through the development of an innovative model of Second Chance School (E2O).

 Spain

Good practice

## Oriente4YEL

Supporting educational and social inclusion of young early leavers and those at risk of early leaving through mechanisms of orientation and tutorial action.

 Germany  Portugal  Romania

 Spain  United Kingdom

Good practice

## Second Chance Schools - Spain

*Escuelas de Segunda Oportunidad (E2O)*

The project offers practical and effective solutions to young people in Spain without a job or qualification, through the development of an innovative model of Second Chance School (E2O).

 Spain

## Tools

### Tools

#### **PES practices for the outreach and activation of NEETs**

The PES handbook offers national examples of how the public employment services work in partnership with youth outreach workers and other key services to engage and support young people at risk of early leaving.

 **EU level**

### Tools

#### **Need for all Youngsters**

*Brug for alle Unge, (BFAU)*

The Danish initiative 'Need for all Youngsters' included national initiatives to raise awareness of the educational system, in particular VET, amongst parents from ethnic minorities.

 **Denmark**

### Tools

#### **Reaching out to all learners: a resource pack for supporting inclusive education**

*From the IBE-UNESCO series 'Training tools for curriculum development'*

The 'Training tools for curriculum development' resource pack provides a framework to support the development of inclusive schools and classrooms. It provides guidance to support teachers on how to engage all learners.

**International**

### Tools

#### **Second Chance - build your Future**

This Second Chance - Build your Future toolkit contains practical tools for initial assessment and 'train the trainer' materials. It is especially helpful for practitioners working with low qualified and low skilled people.

 **Germany**  **Italy**  **Netherlands**

 **Poland**  **Switzerland**

### Tools

#### **MyE2O**

*Second Chance Schools in Spain, Portugal and France*

MyE2O ([www.mye2o.org](http://www.mye2o.org)) shares the educational good practices of the Second Chance Schools in Spain,

### Tools

#### **DIDO - Dropping-in the dropouts toolkit**

The DIDO toolkit contains practical tools aimed at preventing dropout in adult education.

 **Belgium**  **Denmark**  **Finland**

Portugal and France.

 France  Portugal  Spain

 Netherlands  Portugal

 Switzerland

## Publications

### Publications

#### Preventing early school leaving in Europe: Lessons learned from second chance education

The overall purpose of the study was to undertake research to identify good practices in second chance education, their success factors, and their transferability into initial education and training. The work was commissioned against a backdrop of growing recognition of the scale of the challenge presented by Early School Leaving (ESL) in Europe, as enshrined in the target to reduce ESL by 10% Europe-wide within the EU 2020 strategy, and reinforced by the 2011 Communication on ESL.

Download the report [here](#).

 EU level

### Publications

#### Digital education policies and practices on teaching and learning on migration issues in schools

*Transnational research and needs assessment report based on the Odysseu Project*

The basis of this research is the Erasmus+ ODISSEU project, which develops online gaming and digital tools to integrate asylum seekers and raise awareness about the refugee crisis in Europe through intercultural education and civic engagement.

 Cyprus  Germany  Ireland

 Italy  Malta  Romania

### Publications

#### Personal, vocational and occupational guidance in second chance schools

*A comprehensive approach to support early leavers*

The article emphasises the critical role of personalised, vocational, and professional guidance in second-chance schools.

 Spain

### Publications

#### Organisational analysis of accredited second chance schools

*Insights into structure and effectiveness*

The article explores the organisational dimensions of accredited second chance schools in Spain, emphasising their flexibility due to the absence of specific regulations.

 Spain

### Publications

## Second chance schools and their impact on youth

*Analysis of the profile of youth in second chance programmes and their impact on educational and labour transitions*

The article analyses the profile of youth participating in second chance programmes in Spain.

 Spain

### Publications

## Second chance schools as socio-educational organisations

*Characterisation, offering, functions and mission*

The article examines the characteristics and processes of the second chance schools, their educational, labour, and social functions, and their mission and institutional identity.

 Spain

## Quick wins

### Quick win

## Keeping in touch with young drop-outs

Keep in touch: create a platform to coordinate the activities of the main stakeholders working in the field of early leaving in your area.

 France  Luxembourg

### Quick win

## Promote the development of individual learning plans

Developing individual learning plans with students helps to secure their ownership and commitment to participating in their chosen learning pathway. They can also be a way of encouraging learners to work towards achieving their goals.

 Denmark  Ireland

### Quick win

## Quick and easy referral to support measures

Formal protocols for the referral of young people to specialist support services saves time for the VET provider, and facilitate a quicker response to the learners' needs.

 Austria  Netherlands

---

Source URL: <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/en/tools/vet-toolkit-tackling-early-leaving/intervention-approaches/second-chance-measures>